Why Follow Norms?

A Pluralist Approach to Justification

Mathias Slåttholm Sagdahl

Masteroppgave i filosofi, Institutt for filosofi, ide- og kunsthistorie og klassiske språk (IFIKK), Humanistisk fakultet

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

30.04.2008

Abstract

In this thesis I try to develop a partial theory of normativity and justification. In the first part of the thesis I try to explore the possibility of what I call ’normative pluralism’, a position which holds that there exists a plurality of fundamental normative concepts. I argue that this plurality arises because all ought facts and reasons are necessarily relative to some normative standard, and there exists a plurality of these normative standards. Examples of such standards are morality and prudence, but there could be many more. Each of these standards is genuinely normative and consists of criteria that contribute to determine what one ought. These standards are also held to be incommensurable. Throughout the thesis I also argue against the common monistic view of normativity which holds that there is only one fundamental normative concept (usually the concept of ’ought-all-things-considered’). This view is represented by the writings of John Broome, Ralph Wedgwood, and Niko Kolodny. I argue that this view is forced to make some difficult trade-offs with regard to the question of what considerations are normative, and that it therefore has unintuitive consequences. Against the concern over how well the theory I defend would encompass practical reasoning, I try to work out an alternative conception of practical reasoning based on an account given by Joseph Raz.

In the last part of the thesis I examine normative pluralism’s implications for justification. I argue that there are many types of justification, and that the standard of morality does not need some extramoral justification, as externalists about moral reasons believe. This means that moral norms are internally justified, and that the question of ‘why follow moral norms?’ should be answered on specifically moral grounds.

Preface

The ideas for this thesis first appeared in an essay called *Normative Standards and Relativized Oughts*, which was written in 2006 in connection with a MA-course given by Olav Gjelsvik. This thesis contains essentially the same ideas, but in a much more developed and elaborated form that has allowed me to explore many interesting implications. The basic ideas should by now also be much better defended.

I wish to thank my advisor**,** Professor Olav Gjelsvik for invaluable advice on the writing of this thesis. I believe that a number of crucial arguments would have escaped my notice if not for his guidance. Thanks to Professor John Broome for reading and commenting upon the essay on which this thesis is based. Thanks to the Pomor State University for allowing me to hold a seminar on the topic of the thesis. Thanks to CSMN for an encouraging scholarship. Thanks also to my fellow student Eivind Kirkeby for many interesting philosophical discussions, and for making me first start to reflect on the issues contained here.

Oslo April 30. 2008
Mathias Slåttholm Sagdahl

Contents

1.0	**Introduction**	1
1.1	Procedure	2
1.2	The Philosophy of Normativity: How to Solve the Big Questions	3
1.2.1	Charity	4
1.3	A Note on Schemata	6
2.0	**A Theory of Norms: Normative Pluralism**	8
2.1	The Fundamental Normative Concept	8
2.2	Normative Pluralism: An Outline	11
2.2.1	Incommensurability	13
2.2.2	Normative Standards	16
2.3	Objections to Normative Pluralism	20
2.3.1	Broome's View	20
2.3.2	Kolodny's View	23
2.3.3	Wedgwood's View	24
2.4	Replies to the Objections	26
2.4.1	Reply to Kolodny: What One *Really* Ought	26
2.4.2	Reply to Broome and Wedgwood: The Ought All Things Considered and What Rationality Requires	28
2.4.3	A Common Concern: Practical Reason	35
2.5	Positive Considerations	41
2.5.1	Normative Talk	41
2.5.2	Practical Dilemmas	43
2.5.3	Regret	46
2.5.4	The Normativity of Rationality	47
2.5.5	Weakness of the Will	49
2.5.6	Rules and Purity	50
2.6	A Further Issue: What Standards Are There?	52
2.7	Summary	56

3.0 A Pluralist Approach to Justification 58
3.1 Pluralist Implications for Justification 58
3.1.1 Why Follow Norms? 59
3.2 Some Implications for Practical Philosophy 61
3.2.1 The Tasks of Practical Philosophy 62
3.2.2 Heterogeneous Justifications 63
3.3 Sidgwick's Dualism of Practical reason 65
3.4 Summary 72

1.0 Introduction

The topic of this thesis is the nature of normativity. In philosophy we often ask such questions as “why be moral?” or “why follow the law?”. These questions can be understood as a question of why endorse or comply with a particular set of norms. There is a certain way of answering these questions that is very common, which I believe to be wrong. This way of answering the question often has some peculiar implications that frequently go undetected. These implications usually only becomes apparent when we compare one of these questions with a similar question about a different set of norms. Morality and the law may be thought to conflict in some cases, and then we start to ask ourselves what we *really* ought to do. If the two systems of norms conflict, we often conclude that we ought not really to follow one of the two systems. Peculiar implications can then arise depending on the way we answer the question. These implications range from rejecting that we ought to follow the law, to a categorical rejection of egoist considerations, and even to amoralist skepticism. Common to these positions is that they all seem to deny a particular feature of our normative life. They all seem to relegate a particular aspect of our normative life to the domain of illusions. Some set of the norms we think we have are not *real* norms, we are often told. The end result can be seen as a very narrow conception of what counts as our real normative concerns.

Another way of trying to solve the problem of conflicting norms involves an attempt to weigh the norms up against each other. We can then say that all normative concerns should be taken into account, but only one action – the most heavy-weighing – is actually required of us. There is only one thing we actually *ought*. If we take this position, the question arises as to how we are actually going to do the weighing. Can it at all be done? How do we weigh considerations that can seem fundamentally different? For instance, if we take morality to be about maximizing total welfare (utilitarianism), and take egoism to be about maximizing my own welfare, it isn’t at all clear what any weighing amounts to. It seems that if we are to reach a judgement about what weighs more in this case, then we have to take sides and reason either morally or egoistically. And if do take sides in this way, we may ask if we really have taken both considerations into account after all.

Problems arise, I believe, because the attempt to answer all these questions is made from a particular theory of normativity. Wrong answers appear because they rely on a wrong theory of normativity.

This thesis will attempt to work out an alternative conception of normativity that can avoid these problems. The aim is to be able to provide a framework for answering questions about why follow this or that aspect of our normative life without at the same time denying other conflicting aspects of that same life. This alternative conception will avoid relegating a number of norms to the domain of illusions, and so it will be able to provide a much more charitable interpretation of our normative lives than the alternatives can.

Although I shall call this alternative conception a theory of normativity, it is never the less not a *complete* theory of normativity. I will only focus on a particular aspect of normativity where I believe many philosophers have gone wrong. I will for instance not talk about how this alternative conception relates to the "natural" world. I shall assume that a complete theory of normativity is possible that is consistent with what I am going to propose. The alternative conception does for instance seem to imply a certain normative realism, so I shall assume that this realism can be justified in some way.

1.1 Procedure

In the remainder of this chapter I will say a little bit about how theories concerning large philosophical problems (such as the nature of normativity) are to be justified. I will here try to shed some light on the methodology that I rely on, and what considerations there are that should make us accept a particular theory of normativity.

Chapter **2** is the bulk of this thesis and is where I will attempt to construct, defend, and justify the theory of normativity that I will be advocating. I shall start the chapter by explaining the main concepts of the theory and show how they relate to each other. An outline of the theory is presented in **2.2**. In **2.3** I shall consider some other rival conceptions of normativity and some objections that the authors of these conceptions direct against the theory that I will propose. I will try to show that these objections are ineffective, and I will also try to show some of the weaknesses of these other theories. These replies are made in **2.4**. In **2.5**, I will endeavour to give some further positive considerations in favour of the theory that I will

propose. The hope is that by first showing the weaknesses of the opposing views, these further considerations will provide additional support for the theory I am defending.

Chapter **3** looks at the question of why follow norms, and takes up some problems about the topic of normative justification. This chapter only looks at the implications that the theory presented in chapter **2** will have for normative justification. It therefore relies on the discussion in the previous chapter. This does not mean that whether or not we should accept the claims in chapter **3** is all but dependent on how we evaluate the claims in chapter **2**. Rather, the implications shown in chapter **3** are meant to lend further support to the theory in chapter **2**. This last chapter shows the fruitfulness of the theory, by illustrating how we can reach sounder conclusions than through rival theories. This chapter will also provide some illumination on how to go about when doing moral philosophy.

1.2 The Philosophy of Normativity: How to Solve the Big Questions

The question of how to understand the nature of normativity is of course a large and complex philosophical issue, and even though I will only be concerned with a particular aspect of that nature, it is still a fundamental issue with far-reaching ramifications. Because of these ramifications the issue is entangled with many related questions that can constrain how we should understand the more basic concept of normativity. The issue in question can therefore be said to be situated in a complex web of interrelated questions. Moreover, the concept of normativity is so fundamental that the web promises to be of great extent. How then can we go about trying to theorize the issue and solving its problems?

I shall follow Ralph Wedgwood in thinking that the sort of considerations that can speak in favour of a particular theory of normativity cannot amount to a *proof* [1]. Rather, the only way of answering these larger questions of philosophy is trough some sort of inference to the best explanation. By showing that the theory can account for our intuitions, solves problems, has reasonable implications, and *that it does so in a way better than its rival theories* is the only plausible way to argue for a theory of normativity. Not every actual or potential rival theory can be examined here; nor can every intuition and implication be examined. Thus, all that we

[1] Wedgwood, Ralph, *The Nature of Normativity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 11-12.

can hope for is that the theory seems appealing and more advantageous than the theories that we compare it with. Wedgwood writes of his own work:

> I very much doubt whether anyone alive today is entitled to any great degree of confidence in the correctness of any theory that attempts to answer any of the larger questions of philosophy. Since the theory that I am advocating here is a theory that attempts to answer some of these larger questions, I doubt that I am entitled to much confidence in the correctness of this theory.[2]

Although I think Wedgwood is a bit too modest here, we should at least keep in mind the complexities that arise from the interrelatedness of the theory with other issues. But although a proof does not seem possible, we should hope to find a theory that fits our intuitions in such a degree that we can at least say that it is *adequately* justified, and that we can have reason to believe it.

1.2.1 Charity

I said that I shall argue for a theory by attempting to show that the theory in question can account for our intuitions, solve problems, and has reasonable implications (in a way that is better than rival theories). But how do we determine the reasonableness of implications, what counts as solving problems and accounting for intuitions? And how do we determine whether we do so in a better way than others? One tool that philosophers have always used is showing that the theory does not involve any logical contradictions. If one can at the same time show that the rival theory does involve contradictions, then the former theory is the better theory. But what happens if we cannot find any direct contradictions in the rival view, such that both theories appear equally consistent? Another tool that the philosopher can then use is to appeal to coherence by trying to show that the theory best coheres with other things we hold true. But again we ask the question of what counts as cohering.

The tool that is in practice most important for the philosopher might reasonably be said to be charity. Not only is it useful, but it can also be argued to be necessary. Donald Davidson writes:

[2] Ibid., p. 12.

> Charity is forced on us; whether we like it or not, if we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters. If we can produce a theory that reconciles charity and the formal conditions for a theory, we have done all that could be done to ensure communication. Nothing more is possible, and nothing more is needed.[3]

Charity, counting others mostly right, serves as a constraint on theories and is very important (perhaps all-important) in how we evaluate a philosophical theory. Davidson says that "just as we must maximize agreement or risk not making sense of what the alien is talking about, so we must maximize the self-consistency we attribute to him, on pain of not understanding *him*"[4]. Understanding the world includes understanding other people, and in order to do that we must interpret them as being as rational as possible. Thoughts like this does seem to be more or less the received view in philosophy today, and it is something that I will both follow and that provides the most important motivation for endorsing the theory that I will propose.

Taking charity to be the main guide in evaluating a theory's adequacy, I will argue that the theory I shall propose offers a much more charitable interpretation of people than the rival theories I will consider. The problem with these theories is that they tend to conclude that some part of what seems to be normative language is not really normative after all. If we use it in a normative way, then we would be mistaken. But it seems to me that we *do* use it normatively. The normative domain is narrowed considerably down by the rival theories in a way that to me does not seem consistent with the way we speak and act. Some considerations which we often take to be reasons are held not to be reasons after all because they conflict with other reasons we think we have. The theory I will propose aims to accommodate all these considerations as *real* considerations, and so we will not be mistaken when we use them *qua* considerations in a justificatory enterprise.

Furthermore, when we say that charity requires that we interpret people as mostly correct, that can also be said to involve interpreting them as *acting* correctly. Because the rival theories I will consider narrows down the normative domain, they cannot avoid attributing to people a significant degree of irrationality when they act from considerations that the theory holds not to be normative after all. For instance, when someone acts egoistically and at the same time

[3] Davidson, Donald, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme", in Davidson, Donald, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 197.
[4] Davidson, Donald, "Truth and Meaning", in Davidson, Donald, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 27.

immorally, then it might be said that the person is acting irrationally because we think that one ought to, and have reason to, act morally. The problem is that it seems that we can observe a relatively large degree of such behaviour, and we must therefore attribute a relatively large degree of irrationality to people. The problem becomes worse if we also assume that these people also *know* that the act in question is wrong. Then there is certainly irrationality in the picture, one could argue. Yet it doesn't seem to me that this is the most charitable way to look at these things. There is a way that we can make sense of this kind of behaviour and avoid attributing to people all this irrationality, and this means denying the narrowing down of normativity that the rival theories argue for. At the same time we want to account for the intuition behind these rival theories; that this kind of behaviour is at the same time wrong. We shall seek a theory that holds both intuitions to be right while keeping away any logical paradox.

All this is also connected to a way of doing philosophy that limits the way in which philosophers can claim to make discoveries that certain aspects of the world are illusory. Philosophy is more of an interpretative project than a quest to discover what is really real. What philosophy should be about is interpreting our language and beliefs in a charitable way, and that involves assuming that what we take to be true actually is true. This does not mean that we cannot, after due reflection, discover that we are mistaken about something, but we must start out by assuming people to be correct. Then we can see if we are able to salvage it all in the face of apparent contradictions we might encounter. We want to avoid the tendency to let a prior metaphysical conception of reality control one's understanding of the issue that is facing us[5]. Although I shall start out by outlining a theory and argue from there, its justification can be found in the way it provides a charitable account of our normative lives.

1.3 A Note on Schemata

In the course of this thesis, I shall often refer to verbs and actions by using various schemata. The most common sign to signify verbs seem to be the Greek letter φ, and I shall mostly stick to this way of representing verbs and actions. However, not all of the writers that I shall discuss use this way of representation. For instance, John Broome uses *F* and Niko Kolodny uses *X*. When discussing these writers I shall mostly use the same schemata as they do, and so

[5] See Stroud, Barry, *The Quest for Reality*, (New York : Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 211.

the sign that I use will vary between contexts. I hope that this will not cause any problems for understanding the text, and I apologize for any inconvenience it may cause.

2.0 A Theory of Norms: Normative Pluralism

In section 2, I will discuss the nature of norms and normativity, and I will try to develop a theory of norms. The theory and the issues I will discuss, are not in any way supposed to offer a complete account of the nature of norms and normativity. Rather, I wish to focus on one of their particular aspects. This aspect is whether or not norms are homogenous in kind, or whether they really are different in their nature.

The theory which I will offer in **2.2**, will understand norms not to be homogenous in their nature, but as being of different kinds. I will try to show that such a theory can be coherent, and I will show what needs to be assumed in order for this to be so. After I have offered this theory, I will in section **2.3** present the views of John Broome, Niko Kolodny, and Ralph Wedgwood. These three writers hold theories that are contrary to the one which I will offer, and they all argue against it. Section **2.4** will be concerned with showing that the arguments presented in **2.3** are ineffective, and that the theory is therefore not inconsistent. In **2.5** I will try to support my theory further by providing positive arguments in favour of it. In **2.6** I shall discuss some additional issues with the theory. I shall begin this section (in **2.1**) however, by clarifying a bit about the concepts that are used in these discussions, and how I intend to use them.

2.1 The Fundamental Normative Concept

There have been various philosophical disagreements about what normativity refers to, and what makes some proposition a normative proposition. For instance, expressivists might say that the meaning of normative statements is given by the mental states or attitudes that the statements express[6]. I am not going to discuss expressivism in this thesis, and I shall take it as given that expressivism is false, but we should note that even expressivists identifies normative propositions by finding in them certain concepts. We identify the proposition "Smith ought not to kill Jones" by the occurrence of the term 'ought'[7]. There might be other

[6] Wedgwood, Ralph, *The Nature of Normativity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 4.
[7] There are also non-normative uses of 'ought' such as 'Pluto's orbit ought to be elliptical'. See John Broome, *Reasoning* (unpublished manuscript, 2005 (?)), p. 9. This means that the occurrence of words such as 'ought' is not sufficient for the proposition to be normative.

such terms signifying normativity as well, such as ‘reason’, ‘good’ (or its antonym ‘bad’), ‘obligation’, ‘requirement’ and perhaps others.

Some have argued that not all of these are truly normative concepts. The proposition “Smith killing Jones would be bad”, would not be normative, but merely evaluative, some of these philosophers have said[8]. The term that has been used to mark a contrast with the ‘normative’ is that of ‘evaluative’. The thought here is something along the lines that the normative in some sense tell you what to do by giving you some sort of imperative. The evaluative fact that this apple is good to eat does not mean that you ought to eat it. You may have no reason at all to eat it. Perhaps you are extremely allergic to apples. If you are, the goodness of the apple does not bear in any way, it might be said, on whether or not you ought to eat it. On the other hand, it seems true that the goodness of something may provide you with a reason to do something, so perhaps goodness is normative in some way after all?

It does seem clear that goodness is closely related to the normative in some way, but we should note that what seems to matter is whether this goodness has any bearing on what we ought or have reason to. Whether goodness matters depend on whether it is also a reason or an ought fact. This leads to the though that it is reasons and ought facts that are the fundamental normative concepts. In what follows, I shall assume that the above line of thought is correct: the concept of goodness (and badness) belongs not to the normative, but to the evaluative[9]. Our evaluative concepts are used not to generate imperatives, but are used in a classificatory way. In other words, the evaluative concepts does not tell us what to do, but merely designates things into the categories of good (or valuable) or bad.

Yet while homing in on the fundamental normative concept, there is still a certain disagreement. Joseph Raz has claimed that “the normativity of all that is normative consists in the way it is, or provides, or is otherwise related to reasons”[10]. This seems to amount to taking

[8] As does John Broome: ”Many authors include the evaluative within the normative; I do not, so for me *good* is not a normative concept at all”. John Broome, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
[9] Note that this assumption seems to be necessary if the distinction between normative pluralism and value pluralism is to make any sense. That these two pluralisms are independent of one another is witnessed by Thomson who argues that all goodness is good in a way (value pluralism), but that ‘ought’ has only one sense. See Thomson, Judith Jarvis, *Goodness and Advice* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 44. We can also imagine someone holding a converse theory where there is only one kind of good, but many criteria telling us how we ought to realise or distribute that good.
[10] Joseph Raz, ”Explaining Normativity: On Rationality and the Justification of Reason”, in *Engaging Reason*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 67.

the concept of a reason as the central normative concept. Philosophers such as John Broome do not agree with this. Broome believes that 'ought' is the central concept[11]. I shall not enter this discussion, because what I am going to say does not hinge on what concept is central. I can accommodate this indifference, because the theory I will offer is consistent with either view.

Where I will differ with John Broome is on his claim that the concept of 'ought all things considered' is the central normative concept[12]. I do not think we can have such a concept in Broome's sense of it. The reason why I think so, which will be made clear in **2.2**, is that we actually have several fundamental normative concepts. I do not mean to argue that both ought facts and reasons and perhaps 'requirements' and 'obligations' are all fundamental. I think that there is probably some kind of hierarchical relationship between these concepts such that some of them explain the others, but this relationship is indifferent to me. What I will argue is that no matter which of these we take to explain the other concepts, that concept can itself be differentiated into several distinct concepts. Assume that 'ought' explains the concept of 'reason'. What I want to argue is that there are several *types* of this ought. If we assume 'reason' to be central, then what I want to argue is that there are several *types* of reasons[13]. This means that even if one of these terms can be seen as conceptually privileged, that does not mean that this concept is itself homogenous[14].

In the rest of this thesis, I shall for the most part assume that oughts can be seen as conceptually central. This is just done in order to simplify, and I do not rely on it in any way. I could just as well have spoken about reasons in the same way, and sometimes I will. Although I mainly restrict myself to speaking about oughts, I will sometimes speak about reasons and even other normative concepts. I hope that this will not generate any confusion. Whenever you encounter one of these terms, you should have no problem with translating them into whatever normative concept you may think is central as long as that concept is truly normative and not simply evaluative.

---

[11] John Broome, *Reasoning*, p. 8.
[12] See Broome, *Reasoning*, p. 20.
[13] Several writers (see for instance Raz, Joseph, *Practical Reason and Norms*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) have distinguished types of reasons through the logical form of the content reasons. As will become clear, this is not what I will be concerned with.
[14] If it is not homogenous, that does not mean that there would be additional problems with explaining the other normative concepts. All the supposed different types of oughts would all be oughts. They would all share some properties which could still make them conceptually privileged over that of a reason.

2.2 Normative Pluralism: An Outline

The theory that I will propose here is not something I have encountered in a developed form in any other philosophical writings. The theory holds that there is not just one, but several fundamental normative concepts. This theory could therefore be called *normative pluralism*. It can be contrasted with theories such as that of John Broome. Broome thinks that 'ought all things considered' is the only central normative concept, and that there are not several concepts, such as the moral ought and the rational ought. I believe that there are several such oughts, each of them truly normative in Broome's sense. His position could be called *normative monism*.

How would normative pluralism look like? This position holds that there exist several different oughts[15], and it would even open the possibility that several such oughts could exist at the same time and recommend different, incompatible actions. Oughts, according to this theory, can be seen as always being relative to some normative standard. What standard a particular ought-statement is relative to is revealed by the adverb that is, or can be, attached to the 'ought'. Thus, 'legal ought', 'rational ought', and 'moral ought' designate three different concepts. This is sometimes reflected in speech. In some cases we recognize that different standards require different things of us, and we say that while you 'legally ought not to φ', you never the less 'morally ought to φ'. If all oughts are necessarily relative to such a standard, or necessarily modified by such an adverb, then it seems to follow that there is no ought *simpliciter*. There is no simple 'ought' that is not governed by a standard, or that can be detached from its adverb. There would just be these different *relativized oughts*. This is exactly what normative pluralism holds to be the case. There is nothing we ought pure and simple, but only things we ought relative to various standards.

I will say a little bit about why think that there are several different oughts in the first place. One reason for this may be that when reasoning about how to act, one inevitably seems to evaluate one's possible actions with reference to some standard. When thinking of how I ought to act, I think in terms of morality, rationality, or some other standard, and I try to make out what these standards would require of me. In some cases, these different standards will also require different and incompatible actions. For instance, the standard of correct reasoning

[15] Or several distinct types of reasons. However, from now on I shall mainly restrict myself to using oughts.

may require you not to hold a contradictory belief, while morality may require doing just that because in some cases if you don't, horrible consequences will follow. Another example would be that the law requires one thing of you, while morality requires the opposite. Or perhaps the legal requirement would not be "poetic" enough, in which case one could say that the legal standard requires something else than the aesthetic standard. When each standard yields different and incompatible requirements after proper practical reflection, we may come to suspect that there is more than one normative concept, and more than one ought.

We have seen that the existence of various standards makes it possible that different and even incompatible actions may be required of you. What we need to realize is that on this theory, each of these standards are seen as genuinely normative. This means that each of them can impose normative imperatives on you, and that it would both be true, in some sense, that you ought to satisfy all of these imperatives, even if they require incompatible actions. If it is the case that morality demands that you φ, and it is the case that prudence demands that you not φ, then it is also the case that you ought to satisfy each.

There is a dangerous pitfall here. In the last sentence of the previous section, I used the term 'ought'. According to the theory I am currently proposing, we can not really speak of such simple oughts. Every ought has its sense modified by some adverb. If we can understand the 'ought' in this sentence as unqualified, then it seems like there exists an ought which is more fundamental than the adverbial oughts. So if we are to be consistent with normative pluralism, this means that the sentence in question should rather be understood in a more trivial fashion like the following: If it is the case that morality demands that you φ, and it is the case that prudence demands that you not φ, then it is also the case that you morally ought to φ, and it is the case that you prudentially ought to not φ. I do not think the triviality of this should be seen as discouraging. As Broome argues, our fundamental normative concept is a primitive concept. This means that it can't be analysed. Still, he contends that "most people understand it well anyway, without analysis"[16]. I shall follow him in this. I also think that we have a basic understanding of what it means to say that you ought (in either of its many senses) something.

In a certain way, speaking of simple oughts is not really very problematic, even for normative pluralism. Although the various adverbial oughts designate different concepts, it is still true

[16] Broome, op. cit., p. 8.

that they all are oughts. They are different types of ought. But from the fact that we have this basic concept of an ought, it doesn't follow that any of the various types of oughts can be detached from their adverbs. The reason I can say this is because normative pluralism is not a *semantical* theory, but an *ontological* theory. It holds that for every ought that exist, that ought is adverbially modified. Hence there is no ought *simpliciter*. The theory does not hold that we cannot make sense of an unqualified concept of ought.

In fact, the theory may seem to need this concept to be coherent in order to at all be able to be clearly formulated. If we could not understand the simple concept of ought, then it is hard to see how we could understand its other senses – the senses which are results of the ought being modified by adverbs. Thus we can understand a concept of 'ought' which all of its types partake in. It is this concept which accounts for the normativity of the adverbial oughts. But that does not imply that the concept in fact refers to an ought *simpliciter* which can exist on its own.

So normative pluralism holds that there exists several oughts and all oughts that exist are relative to a standard[17]. The fact that they are relative to standards, make them different types of ought, and the type is signified by an adverb. These claims account for the plurality part of the theory. It also holds that all these oughts are truly normative. They all make true practical demands upon us, which is to say that they tell us what we ought to do. This, of course, is the normative aspect of the theory. Both parts have to hold for normative pluralism to be true.

2.2.1 Incommensurability

There is another aspect of the theory. This is the idea of *incommensurability*. The term incommensurability is usually taken to mean that there is no *common measure* for comparison. As I shall explain below, I think that the thesis of incommensurability is necessary for normative pluralism to hold. First however, I shall try to explain what phenomenon I take the concept to refer to.

[17] This is not exactly true. It is not logically necessary for normative pluralism that oughts are seen as relative to standards. However, I think that this is a claim that has to hold for the theory to be plausible, and so I will treat it as an essential part of the theory. See section **2.2.2** for more on this.

The basic notion of incommensurability might be said to be that between incommensurates, that is, between incommensurable items, there is no common basis by which one can make comparative judgements. This is what I shall mean by the term. There are others who use the term differently, but I suspect that this is because they discuss it in the context of incommensurable values[18]. My business here is not with values, but with normative standards and requirements, and the oughts or reasons they generate. If oughts or reasons compare, they do so in a way different from values.

There is a question whether incommensurability implies incomparability. Some authors, like Joseph Raz, uses the terms interchangeably[19]. If there is no common measure, it could seem as if there is no way for two items to compare. I do not think that there is such an entailment, however. What follows from the idea of incommensurability is that there is no *common* measure by which to compare them, no comprehensive way in which comparisons can be done. They could, however, be compared in different ways, which could possibly be described as idiosyncratic. Take normative standards and the question of whether or not to φ. Option A involves φ-ing, while option B involves not φ-ing. Suppose that φ-ing is prudentially required, but morally prohibited. It seems that we can perfectly well morally compare the two options A and B. According to the moral standard, option A outweighs option B. At the same time a prudential comparison would judge the opposite. What incommensurability means in this context then, is that there is no neutral way to make comparisons. They are all relative to a standard, and there is no one true way to compare[20]. This is what it means to say that there is no common measure.

One way in which incommensurability has been characterized is through phenomena like 'trumping'[21]. A trumps B, James Griffin says, if *any* amount of A, no matter how small, is

[18] Ruth Chang reserves the term for items that cannot be ranked in a precise manner. See Chang, Ruth, "Introduction" in *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason* (Ed. Ruth Chang), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). Michael stocker reserves it for items that cannot be ranked cardinally. See Stocker, Michael, *Plural and Conflicting Values* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 176. While values can possibly be thought to be able to be cardinally ranked, the idea seems to make no sense to the notion of normative requirements.
[19] Raz, Joseph, *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 322.
[20] This could be seen to be consistent with what Henry Richardson calls 'weak commensurability' according to which in any given conflict there is a true ranking in terms of some value (or here normative standard). But his seems to me to be more a question of comparability than commensurability, and in any case it poses no problems for my position. See Richardson, Henry, *Practical Reasoning About Final Ends*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 105.
[21] Griffin, James, *Well-Being – Its Meaning, Measurement and Moral Importance*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 83.

more valuable than *any* amount of B, no matter how large[22]. It is, however, seriously doubtful as to whether trumping implies incommensurability. It might even be thought that it is inconsistent with incommensurability given that they think incommensurability is synonymous with incomparability, for trumping clearly seems to imply that A and B *can* be compared. In this case, A is better than B. For this reason, it seems right to me to say that trumping does not imply incommensurability. Moral feature A could trump moral feature B, but here there would be a common measure, namely morality. On the other hand, normative pluralism can accommodate trumping, and might even imply trumping in another way. That one feature trumps another is not sufficient to establish incommensurability, but when two features, or in this case standards, are said to be incommensurable, then that could be taken to imply trumping. When there are two incommensurable standards, those two can each be said to trump each other. In the case above, prudence required φ-ing, while morality prohibited it. If both claims are true, and there is no common non-idiosyncratic measure by which to compare them, each can be said to involve trumping the other.

All this can help us make sense of Joseph Raz's characterization of incommensurability. Raz writes, in the context of values, that when two values are incommensurate, then neither of them is better than the other, nor are they of equal value[23]. In the current context this could mean that none of the requirements is more right than the other, nor are they equally right. Yet we should be careful in making such a statement. The reason why we should be careful is that according to a third standard, say the law, one of the requirements may be more right than the other. What we should rather say is that if two requirements are incommensurable, then there is no non-idiosyncratic way in which one of them is better than the other, or that they are of equal value. There is no super-standard or comparison *simpliciter* which takes precedence when we judge what we ought. By saying that we do not say that the standards are equally good, for that judgement *presupposes* a common non-idiosyncratic measure by which to compare them. We could however accept that they are equally good in an idiosyncratic way.

By now, it should start to become clear why incommensurability is essential to normative pluralism. Incommensurability denies that there is one comprehensive non-idiosyncratic standard by which we can make comparisons. If there were such a standard, we might expect the normative requirements I am talking about to feed into this super-standard. They would

[22] Ibid.
[23] Raz, op. cit., p. 322 and 325.

then be reduced to mere considerations that we can compare *simpliciter* and determine what we ought *simpliciter*. The idea of incommensurability is what keeps the theory from collapsing into normative monism. Each standard and each ought is kept separate from the others by the kind of self-sufficiency that incommensurability involves. If there was a common standard that generated super-oughts, then *that* kind of ought would be the fundamental normative concept that made genuine requirements on our actions. Holding the oughts to be incommensurates, that they cannot be compared in a neutral comprehensive fashion, is the only way in which they can each maintain their own normative status, and by which there can indeed be a multiplicity of oughts.

2.2.2 Normative Standards

I have been speaking of standards on a more or less casual note. In this section I will try to explain the meaning of this term and how it functions within the theory. In ordinary usage, the term can refer to a measure, or to a test, or to a criterion of excellence. When I speak of normative standards, I think of such a test, measure, or criterion that determines whether some ought-proposition is true or whether something counts as a reason. For instance, morality may be such a standard. Prudence may be another. When I am confronted with a practical situation and I consider how to act, I may consult with or reason within one of these standards. I can use the tests or criteria of the moral or prudential standard to determine what I ought or what counts as a reason in the situation confronting me. Another way of putting it is that I can use a standard to determine whether some candidate action measures up to what I truly ought, or whether it measures up to a reason.

A natural thought for the normative pluralist is to hold that there is a plurality of these normative standards. I already mentioned two, morality and prudence, but there may be many more. I will not try to provide a list. All that matters for the normative pluralist is that there would be more than one. The reason why it matters is that it is a natural and plausible way to account for the incommensurability of oughts (or reasons). If it is true that you prudentially ought to φ, but morally ought not to, that may be because φ-ing is required by the prudential standard (prudence), while the moral standard requires you not to (it forbids it). The two standards thus make us able to comprehend that the same action can be something that is normatively required and prohibited at the same time, and it can make us understand why. The reason why, is that there exist different standards with different criteria for determining

its normative requiredness. That these standards exist, and that they have different criteria and can require different and conflicting things, is also a very plausible assumption that I think few would care to deny.

While I would like to leave the understanding of standards at an intuitive level, I also realise that some may want to object to this because they find the concept to be unclear as it seemingly can refer to different things. Consider the idea of an algorithm. An algorithm is a decision procedure, with a set of rules that will result in a solution if those rules are followed. Decision- and game theory may be taken as a particular conception of the standard of prudence or rationality[24]. If we do that, then prudence or rationality will be understood as an algorithmic standard. In morality, certain versions of utilitarianism could also be understood as algorithmic. Certain approaches to law could also be taken this way[25]. However, not everyone is happy with such algorithmic theories. William Child has argued that rationality can not be taken as algorithmic[26], while some deontological theories says the same about morality, and common law theories could be seen to say the same about the law. The precise arguments for any of these positions do not concern us here. What we need to answer is whether the standards need to be understood in an algorithmic fashion.

I think that this is not the case. In explaining the meaning of the term 'standard', I said that what I was thinking of when using this term was a test, measure or criterion that determines whether some ought-proposition is true or whether something counts as a reason. When making this claim, I did not intend to imply that the standard must be an algorithm. What I would rather claim is that a standard is a set of tests or criteria that *contributes* toward determining what one ought. This means that once every feature of the situation is taken into account, concluding what one ought may not be just a simple matter of deduction. A standard can leave room for judgement (perhaps because of vagueness in the criteria at hand).

What seems to me to be essential for a standard though, is being able to sort out relevant features in determining what to do. Another way to put it is that a standard must contain *criteria of relevance*. An easy way to grasp this would be to imagine that each standard can be

[24] Bayesianism could for example be understood to hold that our beliefs are normatively governed by a set of statistical rules.
[25] The early Prussian code of law *Allgemeines Landrecht für die preussischen Staaten* might for instance plausibly be said to embody such an ideal.
[26] Child, William, "Anomalism, Uncodifiability, Psychophysical Relations", in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2 (April 1993: 215-245).

understood as having some special function. Theoretical rationality might for instance be understood as 'truth-seeking', while prudence could be understood a 'welfare-maximizing'[27]. Assume now that a certain standard, call it Self-Interest, has the function of maximizing expected subjective utility. In determining what one ought, this standard might determine that the fact that someone might be hurt by my action does not matter, given that I do not care about it. Given that I am indifferent to the other person's harm, that feature is not relevant for my utility. We could also take the example the other way around. By a certain conception of the moral standard, my increased utility may not matter if that same action would violate someone's rights. The moral philosopher would say that this feature is not *morally relevant*[28].

We can now see that being algorithmic is just an especially strong type of standard. An algorithmic standard sorts out relevance trivially by making everything that falls outside the decision procedure irrelevant by default. The difference between an algorithmic and a non-algorithmic standard is just that the algorithmic standard also provides a comprehensive set of rules that allows us to mechanically deduce the right answer. Other standards may not have such a step-by-step procedure and may call for judgement in various degrees. One thing that could be argued however, is that normative pluralism allows a way for practical reasoning to be algorithmic that would otherwise be more problematic. If we were to try to codify how one ought to act, one might well come to see that there are so many kinds of reasons and so many different considerations to make (perhaps in direct contradiction), that the project could soon come to be thought impossible. On the other hand, if one assumes normative pluralism, then considerations could each be understood as relative to a specific standard. Although we would not end up with an algorithm for what we ought *simpliciter*, we could – now that we have isolated the different considerations – try to construct algorithmic interpretations of each specific standard, thus making all our practical reasoning algorithmically governed. While this might be a theoretical possibility, I have not argued that this actually is the case. I believe that judgement could be called for within many of the standards, but since this depends on what theories one holds about each individual standard, it falls outside the scope of this discussion.

I have now been addressing the question of the nature of normative standards. However, not everyone believes that general standards like these are a necessary or even desirable part of

[27] I am not making the claim here that theoretical rationality *is* truth-seeking, or that prudence *is* welfare-maximizing, only that these are examples of functions that these standards could be thought to have.
[28] I think one should note here how relevance is used in a way such that it is adverbially modified.

practical philosophy. Particularists like Jonathan Dancy can be seen to hold such a position when they argue against the use of principles in moral (and other practical) reasoning[29]. My account of normativity may seem objectionable to particularists because I have claimed that we use general standards to determine what we ought and the relevancy of specific features. While I believe that it would be difficult for particularists to deny that these general standards exist, they would none the less hold that our practical reasoning does not depend on them in any way[30].

In reply to this, I would first like to point out that the use of standards is not an essential part of the theory of normative pluralism. By that, I mean that a standard-based account of practical reasoning is not a logically necessary part of the claims of that theory. The only things that must hold for the theory to be true is that there exists several kinds of oughts (or reasons), and that each of these is truly normative. It is therefore perfectly possible (in a logical sense) for the theory that we have a plurality of oughts without this being accounted for in any way by standards. In that case, it seems to me like the oughts would just be different, pure and simple. The incommensurability that would exist between the oughts would seem to have a brute character.

While the standards thus are not a logical necessity for the theory, I never the less think that the standards fill an important task in *explaining* the difference in kind between the various oughts[31]. The explanation is that if oughts are somehow derived from standards with different functions, then there would be incommensurability (and hence difference) between them because they are derived from different systems of measurement or assessment. The standards of morality and prudence can account for why you morally ought to φ, while prudentially ought not to, and that is because φ-ing is appropriate to the considerations of the moral standard, and it is not so for the prudential. Of course, it might be that something else than standards could also be held to explain the incommensurability and difference of oughts, but it is not clear to me what else could do the job. If the difference is not to be brute, we need to appeal to something, and normative standards seem to me to be the best candidate.

[29] His particularism does not seem to hold only for moral reasons since he says that moral reasons function like other kinds of reasons in not depending on the use of principles. See Dancy, Jonathan, *Ethics Without Principles*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 76.
[30] Ibid., p. 7.
[31] Joseph Raz also uses the idea of standards and what he calls *genres* to account for his value pluralism. See Raz, Joseph, *The Practice of Value*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 39.

This may be taken by the particularist to mean that we should deny normative pluralism, because without standards, the claims of the theory become somewhat mysterious. It seems like normative pluralism would have to accept a form of generalism if it is to be explainable. Yet we should note three things. The first is that the principles contained in the standards need be nothing more than principles for assessing relevancy. It need not be the strong absolute or contributory principles that Dancy argues so fervently against; the kind that takes certain types of actions as always right or wrong in an absolute or *pro tanto* fashion. The principles of the standards need say nothing about types of actions, and can be limited to just assessing token actions in particular cases. The second is that normative pluralism involves a strong form of incommensurability that Dancy finds attractive in accounting for the existence of tragic dilemmas[32]. The third is that unlike the generalist theories Dancy argues against, normative pluralism can account for the notion of regret, and in a stronger way than Dancy can. I shall come back to this in **2.5.3**.

2.3 Objections to Normative Pluralism

In this section I will discuss some objections to the theory of normative pluralism. These objections are all raised by authors who hold monistic theories of norms and normativity. All the authors I present here have a rather similar framework. While they raise somewhat different objections, these are never the less related, and most of them are raised because of a particular conception of practical rationality that these authors seem, more or less, to share.

2.3.1 Broome's View

John Broome thinks that the fundamental normative concept is that of 'ought', and more specifically, a special type of ought which he calls the 'ought all things considered'. According to Broome it is only this concept which can be seen as a central normative concept. However, he does agree that we sometimes speak of various other types of ought. For instance, we sometimes speak about what we morally ought in contrast with what we rationally ought, or prudentially ought. Broome calls these types of oughts *adverbial oughts*[33]. As I explained in **2.2**, it is these adverbial types of ought that I believe can all be seen as

[32] Dancy, Jonathan, *Moral Reasons*, (Oxford, UK & Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 123.
[33] Broome, op. cit., p. 20.

fundamental and which makes up for the plural aspect of normativity. So Broome represents an opposite view, and he explicitly argues against the view I have outlined.

Broome believes that "the concept of *ought all things considered* is really just the concept of *ought*. Saying you ought all things considered to do something is just to say you ought to do it"[34]. In Broome's view, this does not seem to be the case for adverbial oughts. He prefers not to speak of these oughts as actual oughts, but instead to speak about them as requirements. Thus we can have moral, prudential, or rational requirements.

The concept of a requirement is not inherently normative[35]. If I say that "x requires y", I am not necessarily saying anything normative. An example Broome uses is "Catholicism requires people not to use condoms". By using this proposition, you are not necessarily saying anything against the use of condoms. On the other hand, you could be. When you say that some action is prudentially required, you most often are speaking in favour of that act in a normative sense. This means that even requirements can be normative. But Broome thinks that even "if a requirement on you to F is normative, it does not necessarily follow that you ought to F"[36]. What requirements instead do is that they help determine what you ought *all things considered*. Broome writes:

> Separate normative requirements, issuing from different sources, feed into the central, overall ought; together they determine what you ought to do, ought to believe, ought to be, and so on. So in a way, normativity is broken into parts, but all the parts come together in the central ought. The different sources of requirements do not threaten the single central normative concept of *ought*.[37]

This then is how Broome conceives the so-called adverbial oughts. Not as true oughts, but as requirements which may form part of the consideration for why we ought something. I say 'may' because it could be that not all requirements are normative. While we might say that moral requirements should always be taken into consideration, the fact that Catholicism requires something may not be able to take any part in determining the truth of what we ought. It might be true in the first place that we ought not to follow Catholic requirements.

[34] Ibid.
[35] But we should recognize that nor is 'ought'. Broome himself recognizes that there is a predictive usage of 'ought'. Ibid., p. 9.
[36] Ibid., p. 21.
[37] Ibid., p. 22.

The content of the requirement may just be a fact about what is correct according to Catholicism, and yet not be any kind of reason for doing it.

Broome's way of conceiving adverbial oughts seems to support the conclusion that 'ought all things considered' is the single central normative concept. However, what Broome have done here is merely conceiving these oughts in a different way than I did in **2.2**. The account of these oughts that I gave yields a different conclusion from his, so I do not believe that he succeeds in rejecting the thought that we have a plurality of central normative concepts just by these claims alone. If that was all Broome had to say, he would be begging the question against normative pluralism. Yet he does have another kind of argument. While this first line of thought was that we can understand the adverbial oughts simply as requirements and not as real oughts, this second argument holds that a plurality of oughts would make oughts unfit for engaging our practical rationality[38]. The reason is that various types of oughts could come into conflict, as when we say that you prudentially ought to F, although you morally ought not to. This leads to a deontic conflict, and Broome believes for reasons that will become apparent, that there cannot be any deontic conflicts. Now, Broome rightly notices that such a proposition by itself does not lead to any such conflict. From the fact that you prudentially ought to F, it does not follow that you ought *simpliciter* to F. The oughts, he rightly claims, cannot be detached from their adverbs. So there is no paradox in saying that you prudentially ought to F, but morally ought not to F.

However, assume for one moment that I am right in thinking that there is no single central concept of ought all things considered, but that all we have are the various adverbial oughts. The problem here is that these oughts should be able to "engage our practical rationality". According to Broome, the way in which they can do that is through a requirement of rationality which tells you intend to F if you believe you ought to F[39]. But if this is right, and you can rightly believe both that you ought to F and ought not to F, then you might rationally end up intending both to F and not to F. However, since this conclusion can't be right, neither can all the premises. The reason why this can not be right is that it would imply that rationality requires you to form contradictory intentions, and this would be an implausible conception of rationality. To intend both to F and not to F certainly seems irrational on any plausible account of rationality, and it would seem incoherent that rationality should require

[38] Ibid., pp. 22-23.
[39] See Broome, *op. cit.*, p. 78 for a more precise statement of this requirement.

irrational things. Broome therefore thinks that there cannot be any conflicts in what we ought to do, and therefore that there cannot be more than one central normative concept.

2.3.2 Kolodny's View

Niko Kolodny's thinking has much in common with Broome, but the context in which Kolodny argues against multiple oughts is especially interesting. On several occasions, Broome raises the question whether the requirements of rationality are normative. His conclusion is skeptical. He says that although he finds it intuitive that they are normative; he nevertheless can not show this to be the case[40]. Some times it might be true that you ought to be irrational, and he therefore says that he can find no grounds for thinking that rationality is normative[41]. Kolodny follows up on this point, and argues explicitly that rationality is only apparently normative, and that it is not genuinely normative in the sense that there are reasons to be rational[42]. While the fact that a rational requirement applies to one always *seems* to be normative, it is not so in fact.

The reason why Kolodny brings up the question of multiple oughts is that adopting a plurality of oughts is one way for his opponents to argue that rationality can be understood as normative after all. Perhaps one might…

> …bite the bullet and accept that alongside the primitive 'ought' of reasons, there is a distinct, primitive 'ought' of rationality? On a certain line of thought, this might not seem troubling: 'There are lots of "oughts"', one might say. 'There is the "ought", for example, of the rules of chess.[43]

Kolodny then goes on to say that the problem is that the 'ought' of chess is purely classificatory[44]. To use these oughts is simply to say that in so far as one is to do what will count as playing chess, one must follow its rules. So, one could argue that to say that one 'ought rationally to F' is merely to say that not to F counts as irrational. The content here is only descriptive, and thus does not count as saying anything normative. However, Kolodny sees that this would be a bad interpretation of the oughts of rationality, because these oughts

[40] Ibid., p. 106.
[41] Ibid., p. 107.
[42] Kolodny, Niko, "Why Be Rational?", in *Mind*, (Vol. 114, July 2005, 509-563), p. 513. We could rephrase the claim to state that rationality is not genuinely rational in the sense that you ought to be rational.
[43] Ibid., p. 555. This is of course the position I am trying to argue in favour of.
[44] Ibid.

do seem to be prescriptive. We are not merely making a descriptive claim – we are also recommending[45]. He also notes that, unlike the oughts of chess, the oughts of rationality apply in every situation. This means that appealing to a second primitive normativity of rationality (a plurality of oughts), is more significant and involves much more than the analogy to the oughts of chess might suggest.

This is for Kolodny a strong reason why one should accept his view that rationality is not normative, for he seems to think that although a normative pluralism might give us the opportunity to understand rationality as normative, such normative pluralism would involve so much that it would be obviously unattractive. One reason for this is parsimony. Why introduce all these different ought-concepts when one could accept Kolodny's much simpler view? A more important reason is the apparent "difficulty of understanding how we are to be governed by these two autonomous 'ought's" when these oughts come into conflict"[46]. The difficulty seems to boil down to the following conundrum. If there is a conflict between two oughts, then what *really* ought one to do in these conflicts? Some compromise? Or is it rather that we cannot even ask what we *really* ought to do, only what one ought-in-the-rationality-sense to do and what one ought-in-the-other-sense to do? Both of these are "unpalatable" alternatives, Kolodny claims[47].

2.3.3 Wedgwood's View

Ralph Wedgwood's objections to a plurality of fundamental normative concepts are very similar to Broome's. The difference mainly lies in that Wedgwood explicitly objects to normative pluralism by committing himself to *normative judgement internalism* (NJI).

Wedgwood's first objection is identical with Broome's first objection. Adverbial oughts are not genuine normative oughts. Rather, he too seems to think that the various requirements that the standards generate can be weighed against each other such that what we ought is what we ought all things considered. Wedgwood writes:

> Consider a case where you know that you are morally required to do X, and prudentially required to do Y, but it is impossible to do both. In this case, it seems quite intelligible for you to ask yourself "Ought

[45] Ibid., p. 556.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

> I to do what I am morally required to do, X? Or ought I to do what I am prudentially required to, Y?" Neither of these questions seem equivalent to the trivial question "Ought I to do what I ought to do?" But if that is true, then the term 'ought' cannot occur here in a narrowly moral sense, or a narrowly prudential sense. It must occur here in a more general normative sense. When understood in this way, a statement of the form '*A* ought to *φ*' *seems* equivalent to a certain interpretation of the corresponding statement 'There is a conclusive reason for *A* to *φ*'. This statement does not just mean that *A* is morally required to *φ*, or that it would best serve *A*'s interests or purposes of *A* to *φ*; it means that *A* ought to *φ all things considered*…[48]

Because we can still ask whether or not we ought to do whatever some adverbial ought requires of us, the adverbial oughts cannot really be the fundamental normative oughts. It must be the ought that takes all the requirements into consideration that is the true normative ought.

Another reason why the adverbial oughts can't be fundamental is that the first-person question "What ought I to do?" is also a *deliberative* question[49]. That is, it is not simply a question about what I ought to do, but also a question about *what* to do. The reason why this is so is that when interpreting your question we can assume that you are rational[50], and if you are rational, then you will intend to do what you judge you ought to do. Wedgwood therefore thinks that this claim (which I shall refer to as NJI) is true:

> (NJI) Necessarily, if one is rational, then, if one judges 'I ought to *φ*', one also intends to *φ*.[51]

We can see that NJI seems to be very similar to Broome's requirement of rationality. Broome said that rationality requires that you intend to *φ* if you believe you ought to *φ*. Both writers therefore seem to hold that for a rational person, the question about what one ought to do and what to intend cannot be separated. Broome points out that if we assume this requirement or NJI, and also assume normative pluralism, then rationality would require contradictory things of you. Wedgwood's arguments seem to point out further that if normative pluralism were true, such that we could know that we morally ought to *φ*, while at the same time knowing that we prudentially ought to not *φ*, then that would make us *akratic* no matter what we

[48] Wedgwood, op. cit., p. 24.
[49] Ibid., p. 25.
[50] The assumption of rationality is argued for by for example Davidson. See section **1.2.1**.
[51] Wedgwood, op. cit., p. 25.

intend. *Akrasia* – weakness of the will – consists in willingly failing to do something that one judges one ought to do, Wedgwood claims[52]. So if it is a common thing that the standards require incompatible things of us, then we would necessarily be irrational on a common basis[53]. More importantly however, this definition of *akrasia* seems to support NJI, because if you judge that you ought to φ, and yet do not intend to φ, you are being *akratic*, and hence irrational. And if NJI is true, then that would also seem to validate Broome's requirement, and thus Broome's objection against normative pluralism.

2.4 Replies to the Objections

Having presented various objections to normative pluralism in the previous sections, I now intend to answer these objections. Each objection will demand a reply, and I shall conclude that neither of them causes much damage to normative pluralism. I will start out by making a separate reply to Kolodny's discomforts, and then move on to Broome and Wedgwood whose arguments are sufficiently similar to justify treating them together. Answering Kolodny's objections will be helpful in clarifying my position. I will then consider Broome's and Wedgwood's alternative views of normativity. Broome's argument that plural oughts will be inconsistent with the requirements of rationality is the most challenging of the objections, and I shall leave that for last.

2.4.1 Reply to Kolodny: What One *Really* Ought

One consideration that Kolodny mentions against multiple oughts is that of parsimony. By introducing multiple ought-concepts, we introduce more concepts than is really needed in order to provide solutions to our philosophical problems. Kolodny can of course make this claim since he thinks his own account provide philosophical solutions without any additional ought-concepts. The obvious answer to this is that the reason or motivation for why we would like to introduce them is that they actually *do* solve a number of philosophical problems. For instance, we saw that Kolodny drew the conclusion that rationality can not be understood as genuinely normative. I think that this conclusion is highly implausible, and that Kolodny's account therefore does not solve our philosophical problems in a good way. If we on the

[52] Ibid.
[53] Wedgwood does not make this claim explicitly, but I think it can be read off from what he writes on the matter. See Wedgwood, op. cit., pp. 25-28.

contrary could introduce a rational type of normative ought, then rationality would be normative and we would not be forced to accept the problematical conclusion that Kolodny draws. There are also other philosophical phenomena that I believe requires normative pluralism in order to be accounted for. For more on this see section **2.5**.

In any case, I do not think Kolodny would press this point. His main argument was that if we had several oughts, we could not give an unpuzzling answer to the question of what we *really* ought to do in cases where the oughts conflict. First he asks if it is to be some compromise. I must admit that I have a hard time understanding what he means by this question. It isn't clear to me that we can at all imagine a compromise position in all possible cases. Suppose I morally ought to φ, but prudentially ought not to φ, and that the difference between φ-ing and not φ-ing is discrete. How would a compromise position look like here? It seems to me that there can't be any compromise. In other cases there could be compromises though. This would be the case if the difference between the required actions is continuous. Thus if I morally ought to give $10 to charity and prudentially ought to give $0, then a compromise could be seen as giving $5. Should we then compromise in these cases? I think no. Such a compromise could not be justified because it would not satisfy, and would thus not be supported by, any ought-fact. And even if I can find some standard of reasoning which allows me to reach a compromised ought, it still remains true that I morally ought to give $10 and prudentially ought to give $0. Moreover, in order to avoid his position to collapse into normative monism, I believe the normative pluralist has to hold that the different oughts are incommensurable. With the idea of incommensurability, it is hard to see how compromises could be made. At least it would not be possible to make comparisons of strength and find out what option would be most supported, be it an initial option or a compromise option.

Kolodny's section alternative to the question of what we *really* ought to do given a plurality of oughts is that we cannot even ask what one *really* ought to do, only what one ought-in-the-rationality-sense to do and what one ought in some other sense to do. Is this then what the normative pluralist is forced to say? The answer to this is both yes and no. According to normative pluralism, the central normative concept (like 'ought') is always relativized to some normative standard. We can only ask what we morally ought, rationally ought, prudentially ought, and so on. It is therefore true that we only can ask (sensibly) what we ought in this or that sense. On the other hand, it is not the case that the normative pluralist must say that there is nothing that we *really* ought, and I fail to see what has led Kolodny to

think so. On the contrary, the normative pluralist is actually committed to saying that there are things we really ought, and that there are in fact many things that we really ought. All the relativized oughts are taken as true oughts; they are meant to be true facts about reality. If that is what Kolodny means by '*really*', then Kolodny is wrong in suggesting that for the pluralist must say that there is nothing we *really* ought, and this does indeed seems to me to be the most natural interpretation of that word. It might very well be though, that Kolodny means something else than what is in fact true of the world. It might be that what he means is that if the pluralist is right, then there would be nothing we ought *simpliciter*, that is, nonrelativized. However, this is just what normative pluralism claims, so it amounts to no objection against it. It could nevertheless be related to various concerns about how multiple oughts can handle other philosophical problems, like practical reasoning. But Kolodny makes no argument as to why it could be problematic. He simply says that the alternative is "unpalatable". I, on the other hand, think that this position might be very palatable.

2.4.2 Reply to Broome and Wedgwood: The Ought All Things Considered and What Rationality Requires

Both Broome and Wedgwood advocate theories of normativity that are inconsistent with my own. They are both normative monists. The reason why this label is an appropriate one for them is that they both think that the fundamental normative concept is just that of the *ought all things considered*. Wedgwood said that because we can still ask the question of whether or not we ought to do whatever we morally or prudentially ought, those adverbial oughts cannot be our fundamental oughts. It would rather be the unqualified ought here, which Wedgwood identifies with the 'ought all things considered', that must be the fundamental ought. Broome seems to suggest the same when he says that from the fact that there is an adverbial requirement, it doesn't necessarily follow that you *ought* to follow that requirement. There must be a more fundamental ought than the adverbial ones.

While it is true that we can in some sense ask the question of whether we ought what we morally ought or prudentially ought[54], it does not follow, and it seems to me not to be true, that there must be a more fundamental ought that would govern the adverbial oughts. As I explained in **2.2**, it is perfectly possible to imagine an unqualified ought *simpliciter* that could

[54] See chapter **3** for more on this.

be seen to govern the other oughts. We have the unqualified concept of 'ought'. However, I also tried to explain that what I am engaged with is building an ontological theory, not a semantic theory. I do not wish to deny that we can imagine an ought *simpliciter*, but I do wish do deny the thought that there *is* an ought *simpliciter*. I do not think there is an all-things-considered ought because I think that the various adverbial oughts are incommensurable. Broome and Wedgwood still has to show that there actually *is* an ought *simpliciter*, and moreover, it seems to me that if they want to claim that there is such an ought, they have to show how those adverbial oughts can be weighed up against each other – that is, they need to show how the various oughts can be commensurable. It is not enough to say merely that because we can imagine the concept of an ought all things considered, then the adverbial oughts must be commensurable.

There is one attempt to shortcut this problem. It might be said that although we have no clear idea of how exactly we do the weighing, such weighing must be possible because we know that it exists. We know that it exists because we have certain examples of conflicting requirements where the answer seems to be very clear. We can call these examples *nominal-notable comparisons*. Suppose I am in a situation where there is a conflict of requirements. Morality requires me to φ, while prudence requires me not to φ. Suppose further that what is gained morally is very slight, call it 'nominal', whereas what is gained according to prudential considerations is very great, call it 'notable'. An example of such a situation would perhaps be a situation where you would gain a large amount of money by acting slightly immorally. The example can be reversed without that fact making a difference. There could be a great moral gain by forsaking a slight prudential gain. The suggestion is that in such nominal-notable situations, we clearly ought to follow the notable requirement. The reason seems to be that the nominal requirement is so slight that it is outweighed by the notable alternative. This is a common argument for those who argue against value incommensurability[55]. Although I have nothing to say about its application to values, I do not think it succeeds in showing that normative requirements, with their deontic character, are commensurable. The reason is simply that it seems far from obvious that you really ought (in any unqualified sense) to choose the notable option. The argument above would in effect tell us to ignore moral demands, and it doesn't seem clear to me that moral demands, no matter how slight can be outweighed by non-moral gains. It seems reasonable to me that moral requirements, whatever

[55] See for example Ruth Chang, "Introduction", p. 14-15.

they are, should be understood as *duties*[56]. That is, it seems to me, what it is to be a requirement of any kind.

So if the problem of how the adverbial oughts are to be weighed cannot be circumvented, then Broome and Wedgwood owe us an explanation of how this can be done[57]. It seems to me that it cannot be done. Take again morality and prudence. The criteria that determines what ought to be done according to these two standards, are so different that it is hard to see how any weighing is to take place. Let us suppose that morality is concerned with the welfare of others (or everyone), and prudence is concerned with the welfare of oneself (and possibly those which one cares about). If there is a conflict between these two standards, I do not see how it is to be resolved in a neutral all-things-considered kind of way.

It might still be said, in the spirit of nominal-notable comparisons, that my conclusion that there is no ought all things considered cannot be right because there obviously must be such an ought. We seem to reach such oughts all the time, and the concept figures prominently in our speech and behaviour. This objection seems to me to be right. I do not wish to deny that we can reach any kind of all things considered oughts, I am only interested in denying that we can reach a certain kind of such an ought. The kind that I am interested in denying is the unqualified ought *simpliciter* – that is, the fundamental, single ought that monists advocate and that can be said to govern all other oughts. It is perfectly possible to reach a moral or a prudential all things considered ought. I assume that the conclusions we reach about what we ought have all weighed different considerations against each other and have thus reached an all things considered conclusion. But those considerations would be specific kinds of considerations, like moral considerations or prudential considerations, and the conclusions will be moral or prudential (or some other) conclusions. In order to reach conclusions about what we ought, we must use some kind of criterion, and that criterion determines the character of the reasoning. The only thing I deny is that there is no *neutral* way of reasoning about what we ought. There is no criterion which is in some absolute, unqualified way superior to the other criteria, or which takes priority in such a way. Thus we can have moral all things

[56] I do not mean to imply deontology. The utilitarian principle is also a duty. I also wish to warn against some connotations with the word 'duty'. Duty is most often used in a moral sense, but I do not use the word in that sense. The only thing I wish to convey with the word is that there are certain deontic properties involved.
[57] In his book about the weighing of goods, Broome mentions the problem of incommensurability, but puts it aside. See John Broome, *Weighing Goods*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1991), p. 93.

considered oughts, prudential all things considered oughts, and perhaps even aesthetic all things considered oughts, but we can not have all things considered oughts *simpliciter*.

Both Broome and Wedgwood attempts to deny normative pluralism by appealing to the notion of an all things considered ought, but those claims do no more than represent the opposite, rival view. They do not amount to an argument against normative pluralism, and unless they can make a more substantive case for believing that the ought all things considered *simpliciter* exist, or that normative pluralism must be false, then their appeal to this monistic concept should be viewed as ineffective.

Requirements of Rationality

The best strategy that the monist has in denying normative pluralism is to appeal to the notion of practical reasoning and the rules that are supposed to govern it. Both Broome and Wedgwood make such an appeal, although Broome does it most explicitly. The appeal to practical reasoning is fundamentally the thought that having a plurality of normative concepts (whether they be oughts, reasons, or requirements) creates certain problems, and the major reason behind these problems is thought to be that these different normative concepts can require conflicting things. The problem is that of how practical reason can deal with such normative conflicts.

Understanding practical reasoning on the normative monist's view might be thought to be fairly simple. The requirements of rationality require you to do or intend whatever you ought all things considered, or what you believe you ought all things considered. Rationality simply requires of you whatever is required of you by the fundamental normative concept. There is no conflict. If you bring in multiple fundamental normative concepts and the possibility of conflict, then things get much more complicated. The monist can therefore say that his view on practical reason is much more simple and much less problematic, and in this claim the monist is probably right. How much weight we should attach to this simplicity is another question however.

John Broome never the less claims much more than that monism can provide the simpler view of practical reasoning. He claims that the requirements of rationality can *prove* that normative monism must be false. Since this supposed proof is the strongest argument against normative

pluralism, it might now be worth repeating it one more time. Underlying his objection is a particular conception of practical reasoning. Broome advocates a requirement of rationality which tells you to intend to F if you believe you ought to F. The proof is a *reductio*. Suppose now that we accept normative pluralism, and suppose further (as is natural) that two different standards can make conflicting requirements on you in such a way that it is true tat you prudentially ought to F and morally ought to not F. Suppose that you know this. If these two conditions hold, then Broome's rationality requirement will tell you to intend to F and to intend to not F. The proof relies on the thought that this is inconsistent with rationality. It certainly seems irrational to intend to F and to intend to not F at the same time. And rationality can certainly not make irrational requirements. That would be incoherent. So it cannot be true that you both ought to F and ought to not F. There is therefore only one ought, and only one central normative concept.

There are at least two ways to misunderstand the argument. The first way is by supposing that the problem is simply that one could perform several acts of practical deliberation, and then end up with several, perhaps incompatible and contradictory, intentions. It might be said that this is just a reasonable account of human psychology. We might form lots of intentions, some incompatible, and the world is simply so that it is impossible to realize them all. While contradictory intentions would be irrational, that problem could be prevented by the standard of rationality which would require us not to form them. Even though one could, one shouldn't. Although normative pluralism makes it possible to form contradictory intentions, one of the normative standards is that of rationality, and this standard requires us not to form such intentions. If a person has a propensity for rationality, that person would be kept away from irrationality. But the problem was not just that if normative pluralism is true, then forming several, possibly conflicting, intentions would be *possible*. The problem was that rationality *requires* you to intend what you ought, and if normative pluralism is true, then rationality itself would require you to form contradictory intentions. Rationality would then be incoherent, and it would not be possible to appeal to it to prevent you from forming contradictory intentions. The problem lies with how rationality would look like if we accept pluralism, not just with the fact that there would be normative conflicts.

The second way to misunderstand it is by supposing that any weight is put on agglomeration. One could deny the fact that rationality requires you to (F and not F). Rather, it makes two separate requirements. Rationality requires you to F, and rationality requires you to not F. But

Broome's argument does not appeal to any agglomeration. Making separate, but conflicting, requirements is equally irrational. Both ways of requiring is supposed to end up in intentions, and those conflicting intentions are what is at issue. And unlike oughts, which are adverbially modified, intentions – it seems to me – *can* be agglomerated.

So Broome's objection against normative pluralism can be located squarely within the domain of practical reason. It seems like we cannot reconcile the requirements of rationality with a plurality of oughts. Since this is the core of the problem, it seems strange to me that Broome uses the strong term *proof* to describe his objection against normative pluralism. The reason why I find it strange is that the only thing that Broome might have proved is just that there is a conflict between a certain conception of the requirements of rationality and normative pluralism. It does not follow from this that pluralism must be wrong. We might equally conclude from this that it is Broome's rationality requirement that is wrong. But indeed, I think Broome even fails to establish that there is a conflict in the first place. Broome's requirement of rationality and normative pluralism might be reconcilable after all.

Broome's requirement is phrased in the following manner. Call it requirement (a).

> (a) Rationality requires of you that, if you believe you ought that you* F, you intend to F.

The star is simply used to indicate a reflexive pronoun.

In a certain way, requirement (a) seems like an intuitive requirement of rationality. I hardly wish to deny its intuitive appeal. On the other hand, there is an interpretation of the requirement on which I believe the requirement turns out to be false. Still, let us start with the interpretation on which it turns out true.

Remember that Broome's fundamental normative concept is that of the *ought all things considered*. It is this, and only this, concept which tells us what we ought, and therefore what we ought to intend. Broome seems to say that this concept is what the requirement applies to[58]. Whenever I believe that all things considered I ought to F, then rationality requires of me

[58] Broome, *Reasoning*, p. 18.

that I intend to F. I believe that this requirement may well be true. The problem with it is that there is nothing which I ought all things considered in Broome's unqualified sense. I shall not repeat the arguments against the monist normative concept yet again. The point is that although it may be true that for all such monistic all-things-considered oughts, you ought to intend them, it is still false that there are such oughts. This means that requirement (a) can be true, but has no application[59]. And if Broome means for (a) to have this limited application, then his argument against pluralism fails. For it will then not be true that rationality requires that I intend whatever I ought in some adverbial sense. Requirement (a) does not apply to these kinds of oughts. This means that rationality will not require me to form conflicting intentions, and hence rationality does not become incoherent.

The interpretation where requirement (a) seems to me to be false is when (a) requires you to intend whatever you believe you adverbially ought to intend. It seems false that rationality requires you to intend all the different things that you morally ought, prudentially ought, and so on. A major reason why it would be false is just the fact that if requirement (a) applied to adverbial oughts, then Broome's "proof" would apply – we would be rationally required to form conflicting intentions. That this would be so seems to me to be a strong reason why we should not interpret requirement (a) in this way. Requirement (a) seems clearly true when interpreted in the first way, but false when interpreted in the second way. So if we are interested in keeping (a) as a genuine requirement of rationality, then we should adopt the first interpretation, and if we do then there is no problem for normative pluralism. Notice also that the reason why we should adopt (a) is entirely independent of whether or not we are in the first place convinced of normative pluralism. If (a) is meant to apply to adverbial oughts, then whether or not these oughts exist, the requirement would still be false.

We would expect the requirements of rationality to behave rationally, so to speak. This means that when formulating these requirements, we should try to construct them in such a way that they do not result in contradictions or incoherence. If the normative pluralist was to construct the requirements, then he would immediately see that an (a)-like requirement which applied to adverbial oughts would not be a genuine requirement. If normative pluralism is true, then such a requirement cannot be true. Broome is of course not restrained by the premises of

[59] This is not quite true, as it may apply on several occasions where I *believe* that such an ought exist. However, in these situations, we might also say that I ought not rationally to believe this in the first place, and that what rationality requires of me is to drop the belief.

normative pluralism, but he still cannot make up requirements that lead to contradictions under certain contingent circumstances. The requirements of rationality, if they are to be genuine *requirements*, cannot be true only under certain circumstances. Requirements hold necessarily. Indeed, Broome himself thinks that requirements pick out necessary conditions for rationality, and discovering necessary conditions is a good way to delimit the notion of rationality[60].

In any case, Broome does not himself provide a test of whether some putative requirement is a genuine requirement. He says that he can only appeal to our intuitions about rationality[61]. In this case our intuition tells us to reject the second interpretation of (a) as a genuine requirement. Intuition can happily embrace the first interpretation, but the requirement that would emerge is not relevant for worlds where there are multiple oughts.

The same things can of course also be said about Wedgwood's NJI. Wedgwood explicitly says that the version of NJI that he argues for is exclusively concerned with the ought all things considered[62]. So it might be true that necessarily, if I am rational, then whenever I judge that 'I ought all things considered to φ', then I also intend to φ. However, if I am rational, then I ought not in the first place to judge that 'I ought all things considered to φ'. While possibly true, NJI will never have any effect on rational persons. It has no application.

2.4.3 A Common Concern: Practical Reason

Even though I believe to have answered the explicit objections of Broome, Kolodny, and Wedgwood, I also suspect that they would not feel quite satisfied with what I have said. Underlying all of their objections and concerns is, I think, a common worry. The worry is the question of what the relationship would be between normative facts and our practical rationality. Broome formulates the concern when he says that "oughts engage our practical rationality"[63], and that this is a strong reason for thinking that the adverbial oughts and their deontic conflicts do not exist. We have already been through Broome's argument. Broome thinks that there is a requirement of rationality which tells us to intend what we believe we ought, and that this requirement creates trouble for the pluralist. We have seen that it doesn't.

[60] Ibid., p. 87.
[61] Ibid., p. 71.
[62] Wedgwood, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
[63] Broome, *Reasoning*, p. 22.

Still, there might be a worry. This worry is the concern that without such a requirement, how can oughts engage our practical rationality? If deontic conflicts were possible, Broome says, oughts could not engage our practical rationality in his sense[64]. I suspect that something like this might be Kolodny's real concern when he asks the question of what, given multiple oughts, we *really* ought. If we have many oughts, how do we work our way from ought-facts to intentions? Broome says that requirement (a) "makes the bridge between theory and practice" and that "the point of having normative beliefs at all, is to influence what we do"[65]. This influence is governed by rationality, and more specifically by requirement (a). With this requirement we are able to reason our way from normative beliefs to intentions. The challenge for the normative pluralist then, is to provide an answer to how this can be done without an (a)-like requirement.

That challenge is hard indeed. Yet we should perhaps question whether the challenge is presented from sound premises. Let us first take a closer look at requirement (a). We saw that while we could take it as true, it had no application to the oughts that exist and that we are concerned with here. We have so far not introduced any similar requirement that could govern adverbial oughts, and we can suspect that if we do, then we Broome's objection would apply to us. Requirement (a), we can also see, is a very strong requirement, and very unlike the other requirements of rationality that Broome presents[66]. It requires the presence (and the formation) of a different type of attitude than a belief, with a content that is not a logical consequence of the content of the belief from which it is formed. Also, unlike certain other requirements, it is not qualified by mattering. One of Broome's other requirements is that you should believe whatever follows by modus ponens from what you believe, if it matters to you[67]. The qualification is justified by the consideration that you shouldn't clutter your mind with believing every trivial logical consequence of other things you believe. But why shouldn't (a) be qualified in this way. The question is especially prominent for those who share the pluralist's intuition that there are very many things that you ought. Is it necessarily true that you should intend all of them? These points highlights how strong the requirement is, and how it differs from the other requirements. We could also ask whether the requirement actually succeeds in making a bridge between theory and practice. Intentions are just another

[64] Ibid., p. 23.
[65] Ibid., p. 78.
[66] I owe the following points to Olav Gjelsvik.
[67] Ibid., p. 74.

mental attitude, and if you have a prior intention, that doesn't necessarily mean that the intention will be carried out in action.

Requirement (a) thus stands out as very strong and a bit curious. We might ask if we really want such a strong requirement. Does it capture accurately the role of practical reason in how we are led from oughts to intentions or actions? Since (a) does not apply to adverbial oughts and we cannot make it apply without sacrificing a coherent picture of rationality, it seems as if we would need a weaker conception of the role of rationality in practical matters. Although (a)-like requirements seem to be widely accepted, they are not accepted by everyone. Joseph Raz has offered an alternative that I believe might be more phenomenologically justified. Raz thinks that "a proper understanding of human agency, and in particular of the relations between the role of cognition and volition in human agency, presupposes that there are widespread incommensurabilities of options"[68]. Raz goes on:

> I will contrast two conceptions of human agency, which I will call the *rationalist* and the *classical*. In broad outline, the rationalist holds that paradigmatic human action is taken because of all the options open to the agent, it was in the agent's view supported by the strongest reason. The classical conception holds that the paradigmatic human action is one taken because of all the options the agent considers rationally eligible, he chooses to perform it.[69]

While Raz embraces the "classical" conception, we can see that Broome is committed to the "rationalist" conception. Broome requires that we take action out of the ought that is strongest supported. Broome thinks that we should weigh various considerations, and that this should result in one all things considered ought whose content outweighs other claimants to that title. Since I do not think there are any oughts that are the most supported in any neutral or privileged way, I am on the other hand committed to denying the rationalist view. Tentatively then, I shall accept Raz's classical view.

I accept Raz's view a bit carefully because it is somewhat sketchy. Still, I believe that something along the line of what Raz suggests must be true. I remain unconvinced by the rationalist that normative beliefs somehow determine the intentions or actions in a rational person. I do not think rationality is like that. Raz speaks of eligibility instead. The thought

[68] Raz, Joseph, "Incommensurability and Agency", in *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason* (Ed. Ruth Chang), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 110.
[69] Ibid., p. 111.

seems to be that rationality makes eligible various options and the work of rationality stops there. We then simply *choose* from among these eligible options. I think that this thought can be captured well in the language of normative pluralism. Consider various normative standards. In a given situation, each of them will generate some set of required, forbidden, or allowed actions. Those actions that are required or allowed by a standard are each made eligible. These actions are options that are *rationally* eligible. By saying that, we have introduced a new requirement of rationality. Rationality requires that we do not intend something that is not made eligible by a standard. If an option is not made eligible by any standard, then we ought rationally not to intend it. This requirement may seem to fit better with the other requirements of rationality, since it is much weaker than (a). We are only required to avoid certain attitudes, not forming new ones. I am not sure however, whether this requirement is one that we should accept. For if we do, then we might ask why there should not also be a requirement which tells us to avoid options that are forbidden by a standard, such that certain actions would be rationally forbidden. But in that case, some options could be rationally eligible and rationally forbidden at the same time (if the option was made eligible by one standard and forbidden by another), and so we would again have an incoherent conception of rationality. This might tempt us into saying that rationality doesn't have anything to do with the choice of action, that there is no such thing as practical rationality. Yet the underlying thought behind eligibility is that if we are to be rational, then the action that we choose must somehow be supported by a conclusive reason or an ought fact. We cannot rationally act in a way that is disconnected from the standards and the reasoning that result in the discovery of their requirements. That an option must be supported by an ought or reason is what lies behind the notion of rational eligibility. We cannot rationally choose options that are not so supported.

On the classical conception then, choice is not determined by what is the best option or any other normative fact. Rather, the classical conception, in Raz's words, "regards typical choices and actions as determined by a *will* that is informed and constrained by reason but plays an autonomous role in action"[70]. The will is of course a very elusive concept, and Raz does not give any thorough analysis of its nature or how it works. The only attempt he gives is by saying that "the will is the ability to choose and perform intentional actions. We exercise our will when we endorse the verdict or reason that we must perform an action, and we do so,

[70] Ibid. (my emphasis).

whether willingly, reluctantly, or regretting the need, etc.[71]" Yet it is also an important concept. However slippery it might be, there should be no denying that there is a need for it. Leave aside pluralism for a moment and consider a case where you have to choose between two options that are equally good. In this case, even the monist would have to say that reason has run its course and that all that remains is for the agent to simply *choose* one of the options. This case is parallel to the pluralist's case, except that in the pluralist's case, what we are dealing with are usually not situations where we are confronted with options that are equally good, but with choices that are incommensurable. That is, none of the options are better than the other, nor are they equally good (at least not in an unqualified sense). The case is parallel in the sense that in both cases has reason discovered a set of eligible options, but has then run its course. There is nothing more for rationality to do.

But while there may be nothing more for rationality to do, there may be more for other standards to do. We should not conclude that since there is nothing more for rationality to do, what we have before us is simply a case of "picking and choosing". I just said that choice between incommensurates is not a choice between options that are equally good, and it isn't the case that when we have to choose between two incommensurates each choice is equally justified (or unjustified). Unlike cases of "equal goodness", each incommensurate option is supported by an ought fact or a conclusive reason. We cannot say that it does not matter which option I choose, since it does. Morally, for instance, we ought to choose one action, while prudentially we ought to choose the other action. What we should say is rather that each of the options are justified in different ways, and I shall have more to say about this in chapter **3**. This means that although rationality might not determine choice, other standards might. It seems to me that when morality requires something of you, it also requires you to intend that thing. The same thing probably goes for prudence and possibly (but not necessarily) the other standards. So there might be many different (a)-like requirements embedded within the various standards. What does the work then, in the choice of action, is not so much rationality as morality, prudence, and the others[72]. But although there is a sense in which the standards determine choice, it is not the sense that the rationalist wants. For there are still *many* options that are determined by the standards, many options that are eligible, and none that is best or equally good in some neutral way. Rationally, there is still a tough choice that is left to the will. Morally, there is not, and prudentially there is not.

[71] Ibid.
[72] Although rationality may do some work. It requires you not to intend actions that are ineligible by reasons.

What this means is that if you are a rational person, then the choice is indetermined by rational reasons. But if you are a moral person, then the choice might be determined. This alternative conception should make us ask why philosophers like Broome and Wedgwood seems so insistent in the first place on the thought that it should be *rationality* that should decide our choices. Why have so many philosophers throughout the ages taken *rationality* as their starting point in practical philosophy? Rationality, I believe, is most naturally understood as a standard that is concerned with avoiding contradictions in one's own mental attitudes. Why should we believe that these concerns will get us anywhere in deciding what to do? Surely, there must be more worldly and practical starting points for practical philosophy.

For enlightened moral persons then, the choice of action is set. This choice may in some cases be different from the prudential person's choice. Such possibilities for divergence in what option is required naturally makes the choice of morality or prudence very important. Ruth Chang has called Raz's proposal a "quasi-existentialist" view of justified choice[73]. This description is in a sense appropriate in that the choice of whether to be moral or prudent is a choice that has important consequences for the sort of person that one becomes. But on the other hand, it is not existentialist in the sense that the fact of who I want to be *determines* or ultimately justifies (in any unqualified sense) the choice. It would be false to describe the situation as a case of a choice of whom I want to be, since we are not dealing with the question of what I most *want*. It is rather a question of what I will become. This question is important, but is of no help in deliberation. At least it is of no help in a way that is not idiosyncratic. Perhaps prudence or some other standard tells you to choose the option that you most want, but that would not settle choice in a neutral way. This means that we should not understand the choice between incommensurates as solved (*simpliciter*) by wants, feelings, or similar things. The choice is only solved when we reason from, and embrace the conclusions of, one of the standards that make a requirement upon us, and the only way we can do this is simply by wilfully choosing. Even then, there will be senses where we have chosen the wrong thing, for although we have chosen and embraced one of the requirements, the other standards continue to apply to us. Practical reasoning is not as simple as the rationalist would have us believe.

[73] Chang, Ruth, "Introduction", p. 10.

2.5 Positive Considerations

In the last sections, I have been occupied with answering some concerns and objections against normative pluralism. By meeting these objections, I have tried to show that normative pluralism is a consistent theory. If the theory is consistent and reasonable, that means it should be considered as a real candidate for understanding the nature of normativity. I will now try to provide some more positive considerations in favour of accepting the theory. Some arguments in favour of the theory have already been given implicitly in the preceding sections as I have also tried to establish it as a reasonable alternative. In the following pages, I will spell out some additional positive arguments. None of these arguments are proofs. As I explained in **1.2**, I do not think that it is plausible that any theory of normativity can be proven. But although none of the positive considerations are sufficient in themselves, I believe that they together show normative pluralism to offer a better account of normativity than normative monism.

The considerations presented below can more or less be divided into two sorts. The first kind is various phenomenological considerations. These can be understood as intuitions that we may have and that can serve as a kind of evidence for the theory. While these intuitions cannot prove the theory in any way, they can serve to give it a certain *prima facie* validity. If the theory coheres with our intuitions, that could be a reason to embrace it. The second kind of considerations is of a more philosophical character. Rather than focusing on our immediate basic intuitions, these take into account how well the theory fits into a more general philosophical framework. The theory's implications (or lack of implications) will help determine its philosophical soundness.

2.5.1 Normative Talk

Although the discussion so far has been rather technical and there have been much philosophical jargon, I none the less believe that the contents of the theory of normative pluralism might coincide rather well with common thought and speech about normativity. The adverbial qualifications of oughts and reasons that I have advocated here is not a philosophical invention. It is quite common in ordinary talk to hear oughts and reasons qualified in this way. It might be said for instance that 'you morally ought to do this' or 'there is a legal reason against that'. Of course, we also often hear the normative concepts used in an

unqualified manner, so this might not seem like much evidence. However, we will also be able to find situations where such propositions are uttered as 'it is true that you morally ought not to do that, but rationally you should do it' (rationally here might refer to what I have called prudence). Both kinds of requirements here seem to be regarded as true even though they entail a practical conflict. What is more, these kinds of utterances might be offered as *advice*. Even though it is recognized that you morally ought not to do this thing, you are urged to do it because you rationally or prudentially ought to. This seems to presuppose normative pluralism.

One might reply that it is equally, or even more common, to hear such things as 'although you rationally ought to do it, you ought not *really* to do it'. The explanation for such a statement can be held to be that although the criteria of rationality or prudence require you to φ, all things considered you ought not to φ. Such an explanation can deny that rational oughts are genuine oughts and that all things considered we ought to do the moral thing. This might be a plausible interpretation, but we should keep in mind that the utterance is perfectly consistent with normative pluralism. Since you morally ought to not φ, then it is true that you ought (in a sense) not to φ. So, normative pluralism can accommodate this talk equally well. Still, it might be argued that in such talk a sort of *primacy* is given to the moral ought such that we could say that the moral ought is the only genuine ought. There is probably some truth to this. In situations of apparent practical conflict it seems more common to hear advice be given in favour of morality. I think that the reason for this is that the word 'ought' in common talk is often reserved for morality[74]. Morality is a standard that governs and regulates public life, so it is a natural one to use in intersubjective dialogue. There might also be strong prudential reasons to adopt morality as the only standard to be used in public reasoning, since each of us usually have an interest in that other people behave morally. But we should also recognize the fact that it seems like 'ought' is not always reserved in this manner. A friend might some times advise the other to act in accordance with his self-interest and not in accordance with morality, and he often will say and believe that you ought to act in this way. This kind of advise is not something that a normative monist can explain unless he either assumes that it is true that you sometimes all things considered really ought to act in such an egoistic way, or that the speaker is cognitively confused. The first option is, I think, very unattractive. The

[74] This is not quite true as we often use the word 'ought' in means-ends talk. However, as soon as this kind of talk comes into conflict with moral requirements, this ought often give way to the moral ought.

second option is a possibility, but the normative pluralist is able to give a much more charitable interpretation of this speaker.

2.5.2 Practical Dilemmas

We have seen that John Broome denies the existence of deontic conflicts, and thus the possibility of practical dilemmas. In a given situation it follows that all things considered, either there is nothing you ought, or there is just one thing you ought. I have said that his argument against the existence of deontic conflicts was the most challenging counter-argument to normative pluralism, but that it failed because in the end it did not really apply because Broome's requirement (a) does not and cannot be substituted with a similar requirement governing adverbial oughts. However, requirement (a) does apply if we assume normative monism. It seems then that the normative monist must be committed to denying the existence of deontic conflict as long as he accepts requirement (a), or else he will end up with an incoherent conception of rationality. Requirement (a) is, as I have said, a plausible requirement of rationality, so it does really seem like there is no way for a monist to argue for the possibility of practical dilemmas.

Yet it is a fact that many philosophers have argued in favour of dilemmas without assuming any kind of normative pluralism. There have been a large debate around the question of the existence of moral dilemmas, and much of the debate has been mostly independent of the questions raised in this thesis[75]. I do not think it is unreasonable to claim that the reason why many have defended the existence of dilemmas is that there is a certain intuition of their existence, and that it may be quite common. Bernard Williams writes:

> It seems to me a fundamental criticism of many ethical theories that their accounts of moral conflict and its resolution do not do justice to the facts of regret and related considerations: basically because they eliminate from the scene the *ought* that is not acted upon. A structure appropriate to conflicts of beliefs is projected on to the moral case. […] Such an approach must be inherent in purely cognitive accounts of the matter; since it is just a question of which of the conflicting *ought* statements is true, and they

[75] See Christopher W. Gowans, "The Debate on Moral Dilemmas", in *Moral Dilemmas* (Ed. Christopher W. Gowans), (New York/ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) for a general introduction to the debate. The debate that Gowans refers to occurred before the recent surge in the philosophy of normativity, however.

> cannot both be true, to decide correctly between them must be to rid of error with respect to the other…[76]

In this passage Williams criticizes the rationalist conception of human agency (see **2.4.3**) for committing itself to denying what seem to be facts, namely moral conflicts. The defender of the existence of dilemmas is normally convinced by an intuition similar to this. The thought is that denying their existence seems unrealistic relative to the real practical choices we can and do confront in the actual world. Not only can practical decisions be hard, but in some cases it even seems as if we are under real conflicting obligations. Examples of these cases abound in both literature and moral philosophy, and I shall not bother to repeat them here. The intuition behind this feeling may or may not be true, but in any case, I believe it warrants a serious response. The trouble is that it appears like opponents of dilemmas often start out by assuming that they cannot exist. For instance, many Kantians and Utilitarians start out with some formal philosophical views on practical and moral reasoning which can seem to commit them to denying dilemmas[77]. John Broome is another example. Broome denies the existence of dilemmas on what can seem as very formal grounds. The problem with these responses is that they don't take the intuition behind the existence of dilemmas seriously enough. The way that many defenders of dilemmas come to accept their existence is by carefully looking at the norms (moral and otherwise) that we actually have and that actually appears justified, and then seeing that they actually do conflict. There is then an interpretation of the real world and the normative concerns we *do* have before any philosophical theory is built. This argument for dilemmas is somewhat unfair to Broome however, for Broome does not base his claims solely on formal philosophical considerations, but also on an interpretation of rationality. But although Broome has done an impressive study of rationality, he has not made the same effort of interpreting the demands of morality (or any other standards). I believe that this is where Broome goes wrong, and I also believe that this is the best way to come to see the plausibility of normative pluralism. No proofs can be offered, but it is the best theory of the normative reality that we live in.

Traditionally, the defenders of dilemmas have not assumed anything like normative pluralism, and has normally only been concerned with the existence of *moral* dilemmas. In doing this

[76] Bernard Williams, "Ethical Consistency", in *Moral Dilemmas*, p. 125. Notice the similarity between Williams' thought here and the intuitions behind normative pluralism. Williams does not endorse anything like normative pluralism, but some of the intuitions are obviously shared. Normative pluralism is a way to embrace William's intuition while retaining cognitivism.
[77] Gowans, *op. cit*., pp. 4-10.

they have encountered certain problems – particularly in relation to deontic logic. It seems as if dilemmas have not been consistent with certain commonly accepted principles of deontic logic, most importantly the agglomeration principle (if a person ought to do one thing and ought to do another thing, then the person ought to do both things), and the "ought implies can"-principle (if a person ought to do something, then the person can do that thing)[78]. Dilemmas seem to be inconsistent with the conjunction of these two principles because a dilemma postulates that you ought to do two conflicting things. Hence, in accordance with the agglomeration principle, you ought to do both, and according to "ought implies can", you can do both, but in a dilemma, you can't do both. A common response have been to reject one of the two principles as genuine deontic principles[79], or even to reject the whole analogy to alethic modal logic that deontic logic seems to be built on[80]. These responses are fair because deontic logic has always been perplexing and are not imbued with the same level of confidence as the principles of propositional and predicate logic[81]. But having a functioning system of deontic logic would of course be an advantage, and normative pluralism can provide us with a way to make dilemmas consistent with deontic logic. The way we can do this is to hold the basic premise that there are many types of ought – that each ought is relativized to some standard, that is, adverbially modified – such that what we operate with are not simple 'oughts', but 'moral oughts', 'prudential oughts', and so on. This means that while the agglomeration principle and the "ought implies can"-principle could be valid and apply between simple oughts (O), they do not necessarily apply between different types of oughts. We could accept an agglomeration of two moral oughts perhaps, but not between oughts of different types. This would involve introducing new deontic operators, so it would not leave deontic logic untouched, but we would not have to reject its principles.

The consistency is somewhat fragile however, as it relocates the dilemmas from being moral dilemmas to being practical dilemmas. The dilemmas, if the solution is to work, must not take place within the normative standards, but between them. There could be no conflict between moral oughts[82], but there could be conflict between a moral ought and a prudential ought. I do not think such a relocation would be unreasonable. Many considerations which are often taken to be moral considerations might perhaps best be interpreted as other kinds of

[78] Ibid., p. 20.
[79] Bernard Williams, for instance, rejects the agglomeration principle. See Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
[80] Gowans, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Fortunately, this may not be entirely true, as there possibly could be conflicts between superogatory demands. What is to be denied are only conflict between "perfect duties".

considerations. For instance, duties to one's own happiness could perhaps be better understood as prudential considerations. Still, I do not want to insist on this point. It could well turn out that after a proper reflection on the moral standard, we should come to believe that there are moral dilemmas. Normative pluralism allows for this too. What we should note is that there are many reasons to believe in the existence of practical dilemmas (moral or not), and normative pluralism offers the best way to accommodate them. It provides a way for utilitarians, deontologists, and defenders of standard deontic logic to accept the existence of practical dilemmas while denying that they are moral in character. It is likewise perfectly consistent with the existence of moral dilemmas. And last but not least, it offers a way for all of them to avoid Broome's argument against the existence of deontic conflicts.

2.5.3 Regret

One of the considerations that have appeared as arguments for the existence of dilemmas is the thought that dilemmas can explain the intuition that reasons can retain their full force even when they are defeated. Even when the "right" choice is made, it is thought that there may be a certain "moral remainder" or "residual duties". In situations of conflict then, there can be reasons for having a certain "regret" for the option we did not choose to act upon. Jonathan Dancy seems to suggest that a moral theory must be required to be able to explain this phenomenon[83]. He mentions that it is possible for a moral theory to have difficulties with this, for instance with a theory which was too simply additive, such that regrettable features only diminish the rightness of the best action. Once the diminishing has been taken into account, there would be no further way in which we can see the action as regrettable for having those features[84]. In discussing how to accommodate the phenomenon of regret, Dancy takes the passage of Bernard Williams that I quoted in the last section as his point of departure. Williams said that many theories was unable to do justice to the fact of regret because they eliminate from the scene the ought that was not acted upon. Dancy then goes on to give his explanation of regret, but in the end he admits that on his theory

> …it now seems implausible to suppose that the defeated reasons remain present as *oughts* ; instead they remain as *reasons.* On the picture I have ended up with there really seems […] to be only one *ought,* which attaches itself to and emerges from the most persuasive story one can tell about the circumstances. […] And in ordinary cases of conflict only one of them can be admitted, in the final

[83] Dancy, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
[84] Ibid., p. 110.

> decision. So in ridding oneself of the claims of one, one is ridding oneself of error; for one is rejecting the claim of one picture to be the right way of seeing the situation. But one is not in error in supposing that the features salient in the defeated picture are salient, since they will be salient also in the defeating picture. So those features, as I said, remain as reasons but not quite as *oughts*. So in a sense, I claim both to have answered Williams' question and to have rejected the terms in which it was posed.[85]

There is nothing very wrong in what Dancy is doing here. But we can see that while there is a sense in which Dancy can explain a certain kind of normative remainder, he cannot keep to the original intuition that was expressed by Williams. It is quite obvious that all theories intent on explaining regret and that is unable to accommodate several conflicting oughts is forced to weaken Williams' intuition. Normative pluralism, on the other hand, can retain it in full force.

Another point in relation to regret is that one may give good arguments in favour of the case that regret is always irrational in some sense. These arguments can undermine certain explanations of regret, because certain positions will take this to mean that one ought not to have regret. Bernard Williams says that in this case "we must rather admit that an admirable moral agent is one who on occasion is irrational", and that this possibility may well be correct[86]. Normative pluralism has no problem with this because it can accept that while we for instance rationally ought not to have regret, we morally ought to.

2.5.4 The Normativity of Rationality

Niko Kolodny argues that rationality is not normative. One reason for this is that for any particular case, he cannot show that there must be a reason for you to conform to the requirements of rationality. Kolodny denies that "a *nonreductionist* who seeks to explain the normativity of rationality *in terms of the normativity of reasons* can give it. The nonreductionist believes that an answer to the question 'Why ought I to *X*?' must offer a substantive reason for *X*-ing, e.g., that *X*-ing would prevent suffering, or advance the frontiers of knowledge"[87]. Broome is more careful in his conclusions, but seem to express the same idea when he says that he "can find no grounds for thinking that rationality is normative. If there are grounds, I do not know them"[88]. The thought behind these remarks seem to be that it

[85] Ibid., p. 119.
[86] Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
[87] Kolodny, *op. cit.*, p. 545.
[88] Broome, *op. cit.*, p. 107. See also Broome, John, "Is Rationality Normative?" (forthcoming in *Disputatio*), URL = <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~sfop0060/pdf/Is%20rationality%20normative.pdf> (visited 30.04.2008), p. 13.

is plausible that there are cases where you ought not to conform to the rational requirements. Broome says that for all he knows, "rationality may not be normative. Often when rationality requires you to F, you have a reason to F, but I have to assume this is not necessarily so"[89]. I would think that this conclusion appears because both these writers are normative monists. For them, requirements are normative insofar as they are something that we ought *simpliciter*, and this is not necessarily the case for rational requirements. It is thought that in some cases, other considerations could outweigh whatever reason we have for behaving rationally, and so the requirements of rationality could not express any kind of categorical imperative. In some cases, they seem to say that there might even be *no* reason for conforming to rationality. I am not quite sure why they make this latter claim, but I would think what they mean could perhaps be that in some cases, ultimately there is no conclusive reason to be rational; that is, all things considered you ought not to be rational.

Although Broome's conclusion is sceptical towards the idea that rationality is normative, he never the less admits that it seems intuitively plausible that it actually is normative in some sense[90]. Kolodny also seem to admit this intuition, but he offers what he calls the "transparency account" to explain how rational requirements can always *seem* normative from within, yet without this normativity actually being the case[91]. Kolodny may or may not be right about this, but although he might succeed in explaining why we have the intuition that rationality is normative, he is none the less forced to say that the intuition is false. Normative pluralism offers a way of retaining the truth in this intuition. If we reject Kolodny's monism, then we are not forced to justify the requirements of rationality in terms of any ought *simpliciter*. We do not have to justify them by reference to conclusive reasons in the same sense that Kolodny has to. It will be sufficient to point to all the *rational* reasons that exist and that requires us conform to the requirements. Through rational considerations, we can presumably reach an all things considered judgement that we rationally ought to conform, and this is enough to make the requirements normative. We do not have to, and indeed cannot (in any neutral way), reach justifications of the requirements by means of oughts or conclusive reasons *simpliciter*. I cannot prove here that the requirements of rationality are normative, because that would depend on what we take to be the rational requirements and what the criteria that constitutes the standard of rationality would be, and that would mean offering a

[89] Broom, *Reasoning*, p. 106.
[90] Ibid., p. 92.
[91] Kolodny, *op. cit.*, p, 557.

substantive theory of rationality, which is something that is well beyond the scope of this thesis. But in any case, it would be plausible to presume that this can be done, and this supports an intuitive conclusion that Broome and Kolodny have been unable to reach.

2.5.5 Weakness of the Will

One argument that I said was not made explicitly by Wedgwood, but that was a reasonable argument that could be inferred from the other things he said, was connected with weakness of the will (*akrasia)*. Weakness of the will is defined by Wedgwood as "willingly failing to do something that you judge you ought to do"[92] This means that if you judge that you ought to φ, yet you do not intend to φ, you are being *akratic*, and therefore irrational. An argument can thus be made that if we assume normative pluralism, such that we can believe that there are many oughts (some of which are incompatible) that we ought to intend, we would be *akratic* – and therefore irrational – more or less all the time. This is not an intuitive conclusion. Yet this argument can be dispelled in the same way as Broome's proof and the proofs from deontic logic. The problem with these arguments is that they all use the 'ought all things considered'-concept as part of their proofs. Just as requirement (a) does not apply to adverbial oughts, neither does Wedgwood's definition of *akrasia*, since the ought that figures in the definition is the monistic 'ought all things considered'.

But stopping at this point would leave us in an unhappy situation, for since we do believe in cases of weakness of will, we want to have a definition that *does* apply, and we are at this point left without one. Wedgwood's definition is not an unusual definition, and it is a plausible one, it can be claimed. A new definition, it seems, have to be weaker than the former. At least we cannot say that for all types of oughts that I judge apply to me, I would be *akratic* if I fail to intend them. That would again leave us with the problem of constant irrationality. But before I move on to an attempt at a weaker definition, let me first try to argue that we have reason in any case to believe that Wedgwood's definition is too strong. The reason is that it is very difficult to see how Wedgwood's proposal could accommodate demanding theories of what we ought. For instance, many types of utilitarianism claims that we ought to maximize total happiness, and this can be at a great expense to our own happiness. If we assume utilitarianism to be true, or just that a set of people believe that it is

[92] Wedgwood, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

true, we would never the less not expect the relevant agents to do what they believe they ought, because it is simply so demanding. We would be forced to say that the agents in question are behaving irrationally. This may not seem entirely implausible, and in any case there might be good reasons not to believe in such demanding theories. But the point is that if we accept Wedgwood's proposal, we should expect relatively large amounts of irrationality. Remember for example that most of the world is religious, and many believe that they are under quite demanding requirements. They may perhaps be 'sinners', but should we necessarily call them irrational when they do not comply with these requirements?

I think that a better understanding of weakness of the will should start with recognizing a plurality of oughts, and that we most of the time are under various obligations of different natures. It is simply not possible to do all the things that we judge we ought to do. The cases where we could be said to be weak of will should rather be cases where we willingly fail to intend what we judge we ought, *and not because we intend another thing we judge we ought*. That is, we have weakness of will when we act contrary to what we judge we ought, and not for the sake of another ought. With this definition, we could limit weakness of will to cases like addiction, procrastination, and impulses. I can find no reason, no ought fact, that supports my continued smoking. Yet I continue to smoke. Or I am walking from point A to point B, knowing that I ought to get there as soon as I can, yet I impulsively (for no reason) stop to play with a twig. We would then be able to recognize these familiar cases of weakness of will as genuine *akrasia*, and at the same time, by recognizing the plurality of oughts, we could give a much more charitable interpretation of those who believe they are under demanding requirements of what they ought. The utilitarian or the religious man could then be said to judge that they morally ought to act in the demanding way, but prudentially they ought not to (without this being any kind of moral excuse). Their acting prudentially would then be able to make us preserve their rationality.

2.5.6 Rules and Purity

Another way in which it seems like the demands of stringent theories like Kantianism and utilitarianism is excluded out of general philosophical reasons is, as I have mentioned, because of their potential algorithm-like form. Some versions of these moral theories could be interpreted as being algorithmic. As I explained in **2.2.2**, accepting algorithmical normative theories might be problematic for normative monists. I said that if we were to try to codify

how one ought to act (all things considered), one might well come to see that there are so many kinds of reasons and so many different considerations to make (perhaps in direct contradiction), that the project could soon come to be thought impossible. Normative pluralism does not imply that the normative standards are algorithmic, but leaves it open as a theoretical possibility because the various standards seem to isolate the different types of reasons that we have. Thus normative pluralism is yet again philosophically neutral on a point where it seems that normative monism cannot manage to be. Again, certain types of strong normative theories are able to be accommodated.

This neutrality can be argued to come at a certain expense. For the way in which the theory is able to accommodate all these strong theories is, as I said, by *isolating* considerations[93]. One may have an intuition that considerations are not isolated in this manner. This goes back to the discussion about the incommensurability of reasons. On this point I have said that there seems to exist no plausible way in which the various types of reasons can be generally weighed against each other in any neutral way. I shall not repeat the argument. What I would instead like to propose is that the isolation in question is not in fact a drawback, but an advantage. This is not just because there is an epistemic problem about how to weigh different types of considerations, but because it allows a certain *purity* that is otherwise difficult to achieve. If we insist on the possibility of weighing and try to accommodate all the types of considerations in determining what we ought, then everything becomes relevant. This point was one of my motivations for first trying to develop the theory that have been presented here, and the point is first and foremost a moral point. If what fundamentally matters is what we ought all things considered – taking *all* considerations into account – then it seems like morality may have to compromise, and the compromise will have to be because of other *nonmoral* reasons. Perhaps even selfish reasons. Morality, it seems to me, must have a stronger normative status than that.

John Broome discusses this point. In his discussion of whether adverbial oughts are truly normative, he mentions the possibility that in the particular case of morality it might perhaps express a genuine ought. He says that "it may be that the conflicts between requirements of morality and other requirements are always resolved in favour of morality. Or it may be that

[93] Yet we should note that the isolation in question need not be total. One can consider egoistic reasons in moral reasoning for example, but these reasons will probably not have any moral weight. One could perhaps also consider legal reasons in moral reasoning, but if they are to carry any weight, that would only be because of moral reasons.

morality subsumes other requirements in some way. That is to say, it may be that necessarily you ought to do as morality requires"[94]. Broome does not endorse this conclusion tough, since it would take a substantive argument to show that this is so, and in any case it isn't part of the *meaning* of 'morally ought' that it implies 'ought all things considered'. The possibility he never the less mentions here is the possibility that morality and the ought all things considered coincides. If this could be argued, it would be morally sympathetic, but if we did argue in this way, we would be forced to deny the normativity of rationality, prudence, and all the other standards, unless we could at the same time show that morality also coincides with these, and the latter conclusion seems highly implausible. Intuitively, we want to say that rationality is normative, and I think that the same goes for all the rest. Again, we could try to argue that morality and rationality coincides, but I would think that this would leave us with a very unnatural way of understanding the requirements of morality, rationality, or both. Rationality is most naturally understood as being concerned about evidential relations for example, while morality is most naturally understood as concern for the welfare of other people. And even if we do manage to make these two standards coincide, there will probably be more standards that intuitively seem normative. Normative pluralism is the only way in which we can accommodate every kind of consideration without compromising their nature.

2.6 A Further Issue: What Standards Are There?

Two natural questions which arises once one has admitted the existence of a plurality of normative concepts is the question of how many concepts there are, and which normative concepts actually do exist. In arguing in favour of multiple oughts in this chapter, I have mentioned several candidates, for instance the moral, prudential, rational, and legal ought. I have not given any substantive argument to show that any of these are in fact normative. My main concern in this chapter has been to show the possibility and desirability of admitting more than one normative concept[95]. There is then the further question of whether each of the candidates I have mentioned are genuinely normative, and whether there are additional standards from the ones I have mentioned. These questions are connected with the difficult question of what normativity entails, and answering this could give rise to several complex metaphysical issues.

[94] Broome, Ibid., p. 21.
[95] Although in doing so I have drawn on the intuitions that both moral oughts and rational oughts are normative.

I will not try to provide a complete specification of necessary and sufficient conditions for achieving normative status. Nor will I try to provide a complete list of what normative concepts there are. Yet, I will attempt in this section to provide some illumination on the issue.

One could for instance ask whether archery is normative. Archery requires using a bow, which is an action. It does not seem right, however, to say that this is a normative requirement. The requirement should be thought of as merely the claim that without using a bow, it is impossible to be doing archery. This should be seen as just a factual claim. Now consider Kolodny's example of chess-oughts. One could say that one ought not to move one's pawn backwards, or one could say that the rules of chess require you to not move your pawn backwards. Kolodny says that these oughts are not normative, but only "classificatory". These oughts say that unless you follow the rules of chess you do not count as playing chess. Thus, moving your pawn backwards does not count as playing chess. This classificatory ought is also just a factual ought, Kolodny seems to think. Yet, I think it is a genuine question whether this is so. This depends on how we interpret the rules of chess. If it is plausible to interpret the rules as a set of *prohibitions*, then I think we would have to grant those rules a normative status. One way to argue in favour of understanding them as prohibitions is to argue for the possibility of cheating at chess[96]. If we can cheat, that is perform illegal moves, yet still be playing chess, then our understanding of the rules would seem to have to drift towards the normative. Broome mentions a similar example when he says that Catholicism requires us not to wear condoms. He says that there is a genuine question whether this requirement is normative. I can agree with that it is a question, but in this case it seems even clearer to me than in the chess-case that the requirement is normative. We are certainly speaking of prohibitions here. Lastly, we have moral oughts, like the requirement that you should not murder this or that innocent person. This claim, I believe, must be normative. It seems to be our very reference for determining what other requirements are normative. If moral oughts are not normative, then it doesn't seem like anything is.

What we have here is a range of types of oughts or requirements, starting from what is certainly not normative (archery) to what certainly is normative (morality). In between there are a number of types of requirements that we can ask whether are normative or not. It is an

[96] John Broome has expressed to me that he thinks it is perfectly possible to cheat at chess (personal communication).

open question whether chess rules, Catholicism, rationality, or the law are normative. Whether they are depend on our particular theories about these particular standards. For that reason, I cannot give a list of how many normative standards there are, since that number depends on our theories, and I am not going to discuss those theories here[97]. I did suggest something which could help determine the possible normativity of standards however. I said that their normative status seem to depend on whether we can interpret their requirement as prohibitions. Of course, I did not mean to say that normativity is only entailed by prohibitions. Other normative concepts can also do that, for instance duties or permissions. Whether these concepts can be defined non-circularly or whether they are primitive is uncertain, but in any case it does not matter as long as I am able to pick out instances of oughts or requirements that are clearly normative. Morality is clearly normative in a way that archery is clearly not, and whether the other standards are normative depends on whether they require in the same way that morality does.

I shall end this section by making a few suggestions about how these standards can be said to exist. In principle, it seems that normative pluralism admits the existence of a great number of bizarre standards, and that they are each given a strong normative status. It may seem as if every possible action is required by some standard or other. However, I want to say that a normative standard does not exist just because we can imagine it to exist. Even though we can imagine some crazy standard requiring some crazy action doesn't mean that this standard exists and that we truly ought to perform that crazy action. Saying that a standard exists is saying something more than that we can imagine it.

This seems to bring us into deep metaphysical waters regarding how norms can be thought to exist. I have nothing original to say on this matter and neither is it a part of this thesis, but I still want to say something about it. This is because I want to show how not every possible standard can be a real normative standard, and because I think it helps to show how there can be more than one standard.

The account I am going to rely on is an account offered by Joseph Raz[98]. Raz is trying to offer a theory on the existence of values. Raz is a value pluralist, and so he is interested in showing

[97] The number also depends on how the various standards are interrelated. For instance, if I believe that morality is identical with Catholicism, then the two standards would merge into one.
[98] Raz, Joseph, *The Practice of Value*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

that there can come to be multiple values that are incommensurable with each other[99]. Although he is only interested in explaining the existence of values, I see no reason why the account he offers could not be used to explain the existence of normative standards the way I understand them.

Raz advances the following thesis:

> *The special social dependence thesis* claims that some values exist only if there are (or were) social practices sustaining them […] Regarding any value there is in any population a *sustaining practice* if people conduct themselves approximately as they would were they to be aware of it, and if they do so out of (an openly avowed) belief that it is worthwhile to conduct themselves as they do (under some description or another).[100]

The precise points of Raz's definition of a sustaining practice can of course be discussed, but the reason he defines it in this way is that he wants to allow that people engaging with them may not be aware of the values that their conduct is sustaining, or that they may do so with an imperfect knowledge of it[101]. I see no reason to deny these points although they are not essential to my view. However, Raz expresses an important point when he says the following:

> The dependence of value on practice that the thesis affirms is not simultaneous and continuous. The thesis is that the existence of values depends on the existence of sustaining practices at some point, not that that these practices must persist as long as the value does. […] Once they come into being they remain in existence even if the sustaining practices die out. They can be known even if exclusively from records. They can get forgotten and be rediscovered, and the like. Their meaning may change with time […]
>
> You can see now why this form of social dependence does not involve social relativism. There is no suggestion that what is of value is so only in societies where the value is appreciated, nor that the rights, duties, or virtues exist only when recognized. Once a value comes into being, it bears on everything without restriction. But its existence has social preconditions.[102]

By swapping 'value' with 'ought', 'requirement', or 'standard', we seem to get a get a neat account of the existence of norms that is consistent with pluralism. Some normative standards (standards of etiquette would be a natural example) may come into existence through social

[99] Ibid., p. 140.
[100] Ibid., pp. 19-20. Raz also advances what he calls *the (general) social dependence thesis*. I believe that this thesis may also be applicable to normative pluralism, but I am not interested in pursuing that point here.
[101] Ibid., p. 20.
[102] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

practices, but once they come to exist they 'bear on everything without restriction'. Raz's thesis is also weakly enough formulated to allow for the possibility that not every value or norm depends on social practices for their existence. That moral requirements apply no matter whether the thought of them has ever crossed anyone's mind may not be an uncommon thought. The special dependence thesis may accommodate that some standards do not depend for their existence on social preconditions, while being able to claim that other standards do. Raz mentions that the special dependence thesis seems to apply primarily to cultural values, while many moral values seem not to be subject to it[103]. In the same way we can say that certain standards like morality and rationality are not socially dependent in that way, while other standards, like religious standards, standards of etiquette, or the rules of chess are socially dependent in such a way. Whether any particular standard is subject to the special dependence thesis depends on our specific theory of that standard. But as long as some of the possible standards are subject to it, then the number of standards will be limited, and I believe that there are good reasons to think that most standards are of this latter kind.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have tried to develop a theory of norms. The theory, which I have named normative pluralism, holds that the fundamental normative concept (whether it be 'ought' or 'reason'), is not homogenous in kind. Rather, there exist many types of oughts (or reasons), each making true normative requirements upon us. The explanation of this plurality is that oughts (or reasons) are relative to normative standards, such as morality, prudence, or rationality. This is reflected in language when we speak of, for instance, 'moral oughts' or 'moral reasons', indicating that oughts and reasons are adverbially modified in accordance with the normative standard they belong to and that generates them. These different types of oughts or reasons are held to be incommensurates, meaning that they can not be weighed against each other in a common shared way. Any weighing must use a particular standard as its point of reference, and since no standard is privileged, there can be no weighing that is normatively neutral in its nature.

As an extension of this, I have argued that there is no ought *simpliciter* – that is, there is no ought that is not relative – as normative monists seem to think. In order to show this, the

[103] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

normative monist must show how seemingly different types of considerations actually can be weighed against each other, and show that this kind of weighing is somehow privileged and more fundamental than other kinds of weighing. The normative monists I have discussed here have not been able to do this. Furthermore, their counter-arguments fail, primarily because they base themselves upon requirements of practical reasoning that does not, and cannot, apply. This calls for a new analysis of the nature of practical reasoning, and I have tentatively accepted what Joseph Raz has called 'the classical conception of human agency'.

In the end, there is no hard proof for the position I expound. Its ability to convince mainly comes from three considerations. First, its ability to accept and explain certain intuitions. Second, its coherence in relation to other philosophical theories. Third, its ability to achieve coherence with intuitions and theories in a better way than normative monism. The most important considerations in its favour are probably that it firstly, can accommodate and explain the existence of normative dilemmas; secondly, that it can isolate the different kinds of normative reasoning, and thirdly, that it can understand rationality as truly normative. With the first point, it can accept and take seriously our feeling of sometimes encountering real normative conflicts. With the second point, it can show how many considerations, which we take as real considerations, are not relevant in one sense, while they can be in another sense. With the third point, it can accept that we in some senses sometimes ought not to be rational, while still accepting in another sense that we do, thus maintaining the obvious normative status of rationality that some normative monists have been forced to deny. These seem to me to be good reasons to accept a plurality of oughts, especially considering the problems faced by normative monism.

3.0 A Pluralist Approach to Justification

In the previous chapter I made an attempt to establish a theory of normativity. I named the theory 'normative pluralism' in order to signify that we were dealing with a multiplicity of fundamental normative concepts. In this chapter I will briefly try to draw out some implications from this theory that could help illuminate the question 'why follow norms?'. In other words, I will try to examine what implications this pluralism of the normative has for the justification of norms. I will not try to provide a complete answer to the question. By that I mean that I will not say anything about what substantive reasons we actually have for following the actual norms we have. Instead I will merely be dealing with what formal implications normative pluralism has for justifications.

I shall start by drawing out these implications in **3.1**, and I will say a bit about what it means for practical philosophy in **3.2**. In **3.3** I shall discuss an interesting article by David Brink on Sidgwick's dualism of practical reason. By doing this I shall show the contrast between the pluralist and the monist view on justification. This discussion will also show some problematic points about normative monism, and will further establish the philosophical fruitfulness of normative pluralism.

3.1 Pluralist Implications for Justification

The central feature of normative pluralism is the claim that there is a multiplicity of fundamental normative concepts – many types of oughts or reasons – which are all true. These oughts are derived from various normative standards which are incommensurable with each other because they rely on, and are constituted by, different criteria for determining the right action. This incommensurability means that they cannot be weighed against each other in any common or neutral way, since all such weighing is standard dependent. Since the standards ensure that all the derived oughts are true and cannot be weighed against each other, there cannot be any appeal to what we ought *simpliciter*. There cannot be any "super-standard" or "super-ought" that is somehow privileged with having any absolute priority over the other standards or their oughts.

With normative pluralism then, we can recognize that there must be many different types of reasoning, each corresponding to different standards. We can therefore say that there must be many different kinds of justification. When we justify a normative conclusion, we must point to the criteria and considerations that allow us to hold the conclusion as true, and these are standard dependent and also differ from standard to standard. This is the central implication from normative pluralism. Furthermore, since justifications come in many types, justifications do not proceed from some super-standard. Normative conclusions are not justified by the monistic concept of 'ought all-things-considered'. All we have are the standards, and their incommensurability implies that we cannot weigh them non-idiosyncratically, and thus cannot reach the monistic justification. The fact that all we have are the various standards and that they cannot be weighed against each other does not mean that their conclusions are equally good, that is to say, are equally justified. That conclusion presupposes the monist concept and is also inconsistent with the definition of incommensurability that we have employed. What it means is simply that there are many types of justifications. Each of the normative conclusions coming from the various standards are justified in different ways, and are imbued with different 'qualities', so to speak. A moral justification is different in its nature from a prudential justification.

The claims above are simple implications from the content of normative pluralism. Aside from what has been shown here, the theory does not hold very special views about the nature of justification. Justifications proceed in an ordinary way by showing how the normative conclusions follow or are supported by grounds held to be reasons. The difference is merely that we hold there to be many types of reasons (which cannot be compared) and that there are therefore also many types of justifications.

3.1.1 Why Follow Norms?

We should see then that we can answer the question of why follow norms in many ways. But the question itself is not entirely clear, since we need to know what we refer to with the word 'norm'. A typical candidate for a norm would be imperative sentences such as "do not steal". But it is doubtful whether we could identify such sentences with norms since they also have other functions, like requests and warnings[104]. Another aspect of such imperatives is that they

[104] Se von Wright, Georg Henrik, *Norm and Action*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 96.

may not seem to have any truth value. It seems however that all norms can be formulated in term of deontic concepts[105]. "You ought not to steal" might therefore be a better example of a norm. We are thus dealing with propositions about what someone ought. The action that is required might be called the content of the norm.

The question 'why follow norms?' can also seem to be phrased in such a way that it presupposes that there *are* reasons to follow norms, perhaps necessarily so. Take the directive "break your promises whenever you gain from it". We might be tempted to say that you ought not to break your promises in such a way, and that there is no reason to do so. Therefore, we might conclude, the directive cannot express a real norm. The sentence only has the appearance of being a norm. The question is here raised whether normative ought-propositions have to be true in order to be a real norm. If they must be true, then it follows that for every norm, there must be a reason to follow it.

Let us understand norms to be the ought-conclusions that can be derived from the criteria of the normative standards. If we understand the concept of 'norm' in this way, certain things follow. Firstly, for every norm, there must necessarily be some conclusive reason to follow it. Each norm is already justified by the criteria of some standard when it comes into existence. If there wasn't such a reason, then it does not seem as if it would have been possible to derive the ought in the first place. The oughts that can be derived are meant to express facts. Secondly, the way in which the norm is justified is also already given. There cannot be any non-relativized ought facts, so the norms we have must express a particular sense of the concept of 'ought' which would signify by what criteria it was justified.

In what way then, can we say that we can answer the question of why follow norms in many ways? It seems as if there is only one answer to the question of why follow a particular norm, since its justification is already given by the sense of the ought that figures in the norm. This latter conclusion is true. What we can rather say is that the content of the norm can be thought to be able to be justified in many different ways. The action that a particular norm requires can also be required by other standards. This means that for any imperative sentence that could figure in a norm, it might be true in many different ways that we ought to comply with them. Another way in which we can make sense of the thought that norms can be justified in

[105] Ibid., p. 100.

many different ways, turns on the fact that norms can be phrased ambiguously. We can say that 'you ought not to betray your friends' and hold this to express a true norm. In this sentence the sense of the ought has not been specified, and although we may know that the sentence expresses a norm, it might be epistemologically unclear what kind of norm it is. We may not know by what standard it has been derived. In such a case, we might find that both prudentially and morally it might be true that you ought not to betray your friends. Morally, it might be that you ought not to betray your friends because that would mean taking an unfair advantage of the trust that they have put in you; and prudentially it might be that your happiness or utility is best served in the long run by not ruining your friendships. So although a particular well-specified norm can only be justified in one way, there are still two other senses in which norms can be justified in many ways.

Before moving on I should mention that I use the concept of 'norm' in a technical way. It is not necessarily fitting as a general definition of the word. For instance, it may be doubted whether we have norms regulating token actions, something which is a possibility on the account I have given. Norms are often taken only to be general rules governing types of actions, perhaps a bit similar to "imperfect duties". But my aim here is not to give an account of how the word is used in everyday speech[106].

3.2 Some Implications for Practical Philosophy

Normative pluralism has important implications for the way we should understand the tasks of practical philosophy. These implications do not mean any radical transformation of philosophy. A theory of normativity must also charitably account for the way we do philosophy, and it should rather cast new light on our understanding of the philosophical project than demanding transformative changes. But it can accede that some mistakes have been made. I shall argue that there have been some mistakes, but I believe that practical philosophy is largely done in a manner beyond reproach. In this section I shall list a few implications for what tasks there are for practical philosophy, and then I shall try to show one important point where some practical philosophy tends to go wrong.

[106] The difficulties with giving a general definition of 'norm' has been noted by von Wright among others. See von Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

3.2.1 The Tasks of Practical Philosophy

Since we have seen that norms may be phrased ambiguously, one task for philosophy will be to explain in what sense they might be true. Most practical philosophy is moral philosophy, and it is there important to show what norms are moral norms. Not all the norms we have can necessarily be derived from moral criteria, and it is important to distinguish these norms from moral norms. This project requires a thorough examination of the moral criteria and the question of what considerations are morally relevant. It demands a moral theory that is able to be distinguished from other normative theories. This is of course a project with a long history, but it is always important to be aware of the possibility of normative considerations that are not moral.

A further task for practical philosophy is also to discover the truth value of candidate norms. We must try to derive what it is that we ought, and from what standard this is so. We may also think that some of the norms we believe we have are not in fact genuine norms, that is, not all the norms we think we have may be derived from any standard. This is a logical possibility, but it would be strange if we walked around believing and following a large number of false (or unreal) oughts. Moral philosophers seem sometimes to have thought that if a supposed norm was not consistent with the moral criteria, then the norm could not be real. Such conclusions are not wrong from the moral point of view. If an ought-sentence is not consistent with moral considerations, then it cannot be a real moral norm. On the other hand it could be a norm of a different nature. With normative pluralism, we might be able to show that most of our supposed norms are true norms, and we might avoid drawing a conclusion that involves sending all non-moral norms into the oblivion of unreality. This makes us able to retain important norms such as the norms of rationality that Kolodny rejects, and it also makes us able to interpret the world more charitably.

Furthermore, practical philosophy must be conscious of its nature. Moral philosophy must (*qua* moral philosophy) not compromise the moral considerations on which it is built. This means that it should avoid trying to reach any monistic all-things-considered judgements. Firstly, this is logically impossible given normative pluralism. Secondly, and perhaps more deeply, this has to do with the point about the purity of the normative standards that was mentioned in **2.5.6**. If in moral reasoning you bring in non-moral reasons, there might be a real danger of arriving at immoral conclusions.

3.2.2 Heterogeneous Justifications

In the history of moral philosophy there is a long project of trying to answer the question of why be moral. I believe that a particular way of trying to solve this problem is fundamentally mistaken. David Gauthier's theory is perhaps the clearest example of this kind of attempt at answering the question. Gauthier's project is to try to derive morality from rationality by showing how moral principles and behaviour can be taken as a part of rational choice[107]. By rational choice, Gauthier has in mind the view that acting rationally is acting in such a way as trying to maximize one's own utility[108]. Now, one can think whatever one wants about whether this attempt at a derivation is successful. Gauthier's attempt is sophisticated, but many have argued convincingly that the derivation fails[109]. Be that as it may, from the points we have discussed in the sections above, I think it should be clear that Gauthier's theory is more fundamentally mistaken because it is involved in an unsound philosophical project.

Gauthier seems to be attempting to justify moral norms through considerations of rational choice. The criteria of rational choice, maximizing one's own expected utility, does not intuitively seem to be the criteria that makes up our moral reasoning. Proper reflection on the moral standard seems to confirm this intuition. Morality is concerned with the welfare of other people, and not exclusively with my own welfare. If this is true, then morality and rational choice are constituted by different criteria and thus are different standards. Moral norms therefore cannot be justified by way of the standard of rational choice. You cannot reach the conclusion that you morally ought to do something from another standard than morality because the meaning of 'morally ought' implies that it is derived from moral criteria. So in that sense, Gauthier's project, necessarily fails. One type of norms cannot be derived from a standard of a different kind. Heterogeneous justifications are not logically possible.

What Gauthier is doing does not, in the end, seem to be *moral* philosophy, but the philosophy of rational choice or egoism. That is not saying anything bad, for Gauthier may have discovered some philosophically interesting conclusions that the actions required by rational choice or enlightened egoism is more similar to the actions required by morality than one

[107] David Gauthier, *Morals by Agreement*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 2.
[108] Ibid., p. 22. Utility is here measured by the degree to which your preferences are satisfied.
[109] See particularly Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "Deception and Reasons to be Moral", in *Contractarianism and Rational Choice*, Ed. Peter Vallentyne, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

might otherwise have thought. But he does not show that rational behaviour is *moral* behaviour[110]. A moral agent seems to be someone who acts out of moral considerations, and not from his own self-concern. At best he might have shown, although I find it unlikely, that morality and rationality require the exact same actions, but we might still say that the moral and the rational agents act from different reasons and justify their actions in different ways[111]. There is also the suspicion that if the actions required of rational choice and morality coincide, that would only be contingently so, in which case we could not say that a rational person necessarily does the thing that is morally required. But even if it did, we could still speak of two different types of justifications, so long as the criteria of the standards were not identical.

Gauthier wants to deny my conclusion. He considers the view that there are no extramoral foundations for moral justification, and that morality needs no additional justification than moral considerations. What he says though is that we have a mode of justification that does not require the introduction of moral considerations, and this he calls the "neutral, deliberative justification"[112]. This mode of justification is nothing other than subjective expected utility maximization. So Gauthier is a normative monist, but of a different kind than Broome and Wedgwood who wanted to unify our different considerations into 'all-things-considered' oughts. For Gauthier, subjective expected utility maximization is all that matters to what we ought and to justification. Gauthier says that

> If morality perishes, the justificatory enterprise, in relation to choice and action, does not perish with it. Rather, one mode of justification perishes, a mode that, it may seem, now hangs unsupported. But not only unsupported, for it is difficult to deny that deliberative justification is more clearly basic, that it cannot be avoided insofar as we are rational agents, so that if moral justification conflicts with it, morality seems not only unsupported but opposed by what is rationally more fundamental.[113]

But in chapter **2**, we saw that it is perfectly possible to deny that this kind of deliberative type of justification, or indeed *any* kind of justification, is more basic or fundamental. If the moral

[110] My conclusion here is shared by David Copp. See "Contractarianism and Moral Skepticism", in *Contractarianism and Rational Choice*, p. 219.
[111] I find it difficult to see why we, on Gauthier's theory, ought to heed those persons without any bargaining power. Because of this, among other problems, I do not think the actions required by rational choice coincide with the actions required by morality. This problem also shows the moral danger of impure moral theories.
[112] David Gauthier, "Why Contractarianism?", in *Contractarianism and Rational Choice*, p. 19.
[113] Ibid.

mode of justification conflicts with the rational, that does not mean that we have to give up one of them and call it illusory.

We should agree with Peter Vallentyne when he says that Gauthier is not interested in arguing about the proper conception of morality, and that if his theory does not capture the traditional conception of morality, then Gauthier would say that this is so much the worse for the traditional conception[114]. This means that if Gauthier's theory would imply something which our moral intuitions find abhorrent, then he would still be forced to say that that is what we ought to do (and that this is the only thing we ought to do). This is a danger of insisting on just one mode of justification. With normative pluralism, we can understand how it can be true that we ought not to do it, since we can adopt a moral framework. But if there are several modes of justification, then the possibility of moral justifications does not imply that we must sacrifice the normativity of the principles of rational choice.

3.3 Sidgwick's Dualism of Practical Reason

In the concluding chapter of Henry Sidgwick's *The Methods of Ethics*, there arises a conundrum. After Sidgwick throughout his book has argued for the reasonableness of Utilitarianism, even as the "ultimate standard of right conduct"[115], he now argues that the same thing can be said about Egoism (which he also has called Prudence). He writes:

> It would be contrary to Common Sense to deny that the distinction between any one individual and any other is real and fundamental, and that consequently "I" am concerned with the quality of my existence as an individual in a sense, fundamentally important, in which I am not concerned with the quality of the existence of other individuals: and this being so, I do not see how it can be proved that this distinction is not to be taken as fundamental in determining the ultimate end of rational action for an individual.[116]

This passage can be seen as puzzling because it has given rise to what has been called the "dualism of practical reason". The dualism of practical reason results from the fact that two of Sidgwick's methods of ethics – egoism and utilitarianism – are supposed to be equally

[114] Peter Vallentyne, "Gauthier's Three Projects", in *Contractarianism and Rational Choice*, p. 2.
[115] Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981), p. 497.
[116] Ibid., p. 498.

defensible[117]. It can seem as if Sidgwick concludes that it is true both that you ought to do what benevolence or utilitarianism requires, and that you ought to do what prudence or egoism requires. Since these standards rely on different criteria in determining what you ought, it also seems that they will require different things. This sounds rather similar to normative pluralism, and from that perspective, the passage is perhaps not so puzzling after all. I do not wish to argue that Sidgwick should correctly be interpreted as a normative pluralist (or dualist), but at least I think I can claim that normative pluralism is able to make sense of the notion that the two methods are equally defensible. It can do this without supposing any contradiction in Sidgwick's thoughts, and thus avoiding the conclusion of "moral chaos" and the failure of the moral project.

There are other interpretations of Sidgwick. One that is especially interesting is an interpretation offered by David Brink, since this interpretation raises some complex questions about standards and justification. I will go through Brink's analysis quite thoroughly because the questions it raises throws some light upon the implications of normative pluralism and its fruitfulness as a theory. My contention shall be that normative pluralism can solve the problems that Brink raises better than his own analysis can.

Brink says that the main difficulty in understanding the dualism of practical reason is whether to represent it as (a) a conflict between *competing moral theories*, that is, between utilitarianism and *ethical* egoism, or as (b) a conflict between a utilitarian theory of *morality* and an egoist theory of *rationality*[118]. He says further that the interpretive choice between these two options depends on how we should understand Sidgwick's views about the relationship between rationality and morality, and in particular upon whether Sidgwick should be understood as an *internalist* or an *externalist*. He says that (a) derives from an internalist reading, while (b) requires an externalist reading. These two positions are defined in the following way[119]:

> *Internalism*: The view that there is an internal or conceptual connection between moral considerations and either motivation or reasons for action. It is an internal or conceptual truth about morality that moral obligation or recognition of moral

[117] David O. Brink, "Sidgwick's Dualism of Practical Reason", in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (Vol. 66, No, 3; September 1988, 291-307), p. 291.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., p. 292.

> obligation provides the agent with reason to perform his obligation. The rationality of morality cannot depend upon anything external to moral considerations themselves. Internalism claims that it is true in virtue of the concept of morality that moral considerations necessarily provide agents with reasons for action.
>
> *Externalism*: The view that there is no internal or conceptual connection between morality and rationality. The rationality of moral considerations depends upon factors external to the concept of morality, that is, external to the fact that the considerations in question are moral considerations.

Before going on we should take note of two things. First, Brink says about internalism that it is the view that there is an internal connection between moral considerations and *either motivation or reasons for action*. From the rest of Brink's discussion it should be clear that he is only talking about the relationship between morality and reasons for action. One can be an internalist about motivation, but it seems to me that this question can be separated from the question about internalism of reasons. Brink does not seem to rely on these issues being related, and neither shall I. Indeed it might seem as if the normative pluralist is committed to denying motivational internalism. Remember that we rejected Wedgwood's Normative Judgement Internalism (NJI) which claimed that all rational people will intend what they judge they ought. The second thing we should note is that when Brink speaks bout 'rationality' and whether some obligation is 'rational', he only asks whether we have reasons to comply. He does not use rationality to refer to a specific standard with determinate criteria, like David Gauthier does when he understands rationality as equivalent with the criteria of rational choice theory. Brink is thus not talking about a specific *kind* of reason, but about reasons in general.

Brink admits of being an externalist[120], and he also thinks that Sidgwick ought to be understood in this way[121]. What speaks in favour of internalism is the fact that it is a common and important belief about the nature of morality and its role in our practical thinking that well informed reasonable people could not always be indifferent to moral considerations, and internalism promises to establish this connection much more securely than externalism can[122].

[120] Ibid., p. 293.
[121] Ibid., p. 306.
[122] Ibid.

If morality is to be justified through extramoral considerations, then it might turn out that we ought not to be moral after all, and the latter conclusion does not seem intuitive. But Brink believes that internalism is too costly. He says the following:

> There is a certain kind of scepticism about morality – *amoralist scepticism* – which both common sense thinking about morality and a long philosophical tradition asks us to take seriously. Amoralist scepticism asks why we should care about morality or moral demands. Sometimes morality seems to demand much of us. In reflecting on these moral requirements, it can seem natural to ask 'Why should I be moral?'. The externalist can take the amoral sceptic seriously and try to answer him. The internalist, however, must claim that amoral scepticism is really incoherent. According to the internalist, the amoral sceptic must be guilty of either a moral or a conceptual mistake.[123]

The problem with internalism is therefore that it is a too easy solution to a long philosophical problem and that it is not able to represent the amoralist challenge. The externalist can not only represent the problem, but can even try to answer it by showing that an amoralist is irrational not to care about moral considerations[124].

Now, since externalism is in Brink's view, the best option, he wants to interpret Sidgwick charitably by construing him as an externalist. In doing this, Brink says it is most natural to treat the dualism of practical reason as (b) a conflict between utilitarian *morality* and egoist *rationality*. Brink says that "it seems pretty clear that Sidgwick views the dualism of practical reason, not as a conflict between competing moral theories, but as raising the question of the justifiability of morality"[125]. Although (a) – the view that the dualism of practical reason represents a conflict between competing *moral* theories – does not strictly entail internalism, (b) does entail externalism. Option (b) takes the amoralist challenge seriously and that requires externalism, according to Brink. Option (a) also seems unattractive because it is difficult to accept that we can see egoism as an *ethical* theory. Brinks writes that:

> […] ethical egoism can appeal to the argument for the near coincidence of self-interest and duty to rebut the charge that ethical egoism is a nonstarter. Now there is something in this suggestion. If the demands of self-interest and duty can be shown to coincide to a large extent, then this makes ethical egoism *less* counter-intuitive than it would otherwise be. But I do not think that this is enough to render ethical egoism very plausible. For our common sense moral beliefs include not only first order moral beliefs

[123] Ibid., p. 293.
[124] Ibid., p. 294.
[125] Ibid., p. 303.

> about what actions are morally required of us but also second order moral beliefs about why those actions are morally required of us.[126]

Brink supposes that ethical egoism will only seem plausible to an internalist since an internalist requires that morality necessarily provides reasons for action[127]. It might for instance be thought, as Gauthier seems to do, that the only kind of reasons we have are the egoistic ones. Finally, Brink thinks that Sidgwick's epistemology demands an externalist reading. Brink says that Sidgwick claims that both utilitarianism and egoism are the object of fundamental intuitions, that is, they are both self-evident[128]. One of the conditions of self-evident propositions is that they must be mutually consistent[129]. But since utilitarianism and *ethical* egoism seem inconsistent – they are competing, incompatible moral theories – the egoism that is referred to must instead be *rational* egoism.

These three considerations – taking amoralist scepticism seriously, the problem of viewing egoism as an ethical theory, and the epistemological concern of inconsistent self-evident moral theories – all point to understanding the dualism of practical reason as (b), namely as a conflict between moral utilitarianism and rational egoism. And (b) requires externalism, Brink says.

Although I can happily accept (b), I shall deny that (b) requires externalism. I shall also deny that externalism is our best option, and that it provides the most charitable interpretation of Sidgwick. Brink's analysis is a good one. But he fails to take into account the possibility of normative pluralism, and this is where he goes wrong. Brink's normative monism becomes apparent in this passage:

> An externalist asks whether she ought to do as morality requires. She might restate her question, somewhat paradoxically, by asking whether she ought to do what she ought to do. The externalist can remove this air of paradox by distinguishing between two senses of 'ought': a moral ought and an ought of rationality. She can then admit that it is part of the meaning of the ought of rationality that if we ought (in this sense) to do something, then we have reason to do that thing, and still deny that it is part

[126] Ibid., p. 301. Brink's argument is very similar to the argument I offered against Gauthier's theory as a moral theory. It isn't enough for being a moral theory that rational choice should require the same actions as those required by traditional moral considerations.
[127] Ibid., p. 296.
[128] Ibid., p. 304.
[129] Sidgwick, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

> of the meaning of a moral ought that if we ought (in this sense) to do something, we thereby have a reason to do that thing.[130]

At first glance, this may seem similar to normative pluralism since Brink distinguishes between two senses of 'ought'; the moral and the rational ought. But in fact, Brink is making the exact same move as Broome; he is making the distinction by relegating the 'moral ought' to the non-normative domain. The ought of rationality becomes the monistic ought (perhaps identical to the ought all-things-considered), while morality only gives the appearance of being a real ought. We have already been over why this monistic ought will not do, but let us now look at what possibilities normative pluralism gives us in the present context.

As to the question of amoralist skepticism, Brink is right in rejecting theories that cannot even ask the amoralist question in any serious way. We should require of theories of normativity that they permit us to ask "ought I to follow the norms of morality?" and leaving it as an open question. On the other hand, Brink admits that internalism has some advantages because it is able to establish securely a positive answer to this question. It might seem that if anything is normative, morality is. Moral norms might be seen as exemplars of what counts as being real norms. Further, the internal connection between morality and reasons that internalism posits also seem to have some intuitive appeal. If we are to count moral norms as real norms, then it seems that we must have reason to follow them, or else they wouldn't be genuine norms. In any case, normative pluralism is able to accommodate both sides of the apparent dilemma. By saying that norms are the ought-conclusions that can be derived from normative standards (in this case morality), we imply that there is an internal connection between norms and reasons. The norms in question are necessarily justified by the standard they are derived from. But even if we take this internalist position that follows from our definition of norms, we still can make sense of amoralist skepticism. For we also recognize that there are other standards besides morality. There is then a clear sense in which we can ask whether one ought to follow the moral norms. Once we take up another standard as the justifying framework, we can come to the conclusion that from this standpoint there is no reason to be moral. Sidgwick mentions egoism or prudence as a standard that is different from morality. The criteria of this standard are sufficiently different from the criteria of morality that it does indeed seem like we often have no prudential reasons to be moral. Amoralist skepticism then becomes the position where we ask from a non-moral standpoint whether we have reason to be moral. We can even

[130] Brink, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

say that the amoralist skeptic is in a sense right. But this does not mean that morality is not justified in any way. If we do not reason from moral considerations it should not be surprising that we can deny that we ought to be moral, but once we do reason from these considerations things will seem rather different. We can thus accommodate amoralist skepticism – even the *truth* of amoralist skepticism – while still accepting that there is an internal connection between reasons and morality which ensures that morality is justified.

We can see that (b) then – the understanding of the dualism of practical reason as a conflict between a utilitarian theory of morality and an egoist theory of rationality – is consistent with internalism and hence does not require externalism. Brink argued that (b) makes us able to ask the amoralist question of whether we have reasons (identified by egoism) to be moral, and that this required externalism. Egoism is interpreted to be the external standard which either does or does not justify morality. Internalism though, can by assuming normative pluralism, take there to be several standards, each internally justified, each self-evident in Sidgwick's sense, and thus understand amoralist skepticism as the rejection of moral norms from a prudential or other non-moral standard.

So (b) does not require externalism. But now it also seems like internalism, along with normative pluralism, is able to give a much more charitable interpretation of Sidgwick. Brink says that only the externalist reading allows us to avoid attributing to Sidgwick a fairly significant inconsistency or confusion[131]. Although Brink may be right in this claim if we assume normative monism, we have seen that this does not seem to be the case if we assume normative pluralism. And while Brink's externalist reading is able to avoid some conceptual inconsistencies, the reading nonetheless brings Sidgwick into other difficulties. Brink himself admits that the externalist reading does not vindicate in a good way the common belief that agents typically do have reasons to be moral[132]. He mentions that it can seem like morality sometimes demands too much of us[133]. If what provides reasons for action is egoism, then it seems as if we often have reason not to be moral. Moreover, if our conceptions of morality also include second-order beliefs about *why* to follow moral norms, then it seems we cannot ever prudentially be moral. For if we act out of egoistic considerations, then even if the action is the same as that required by morality, we still have not acted morally. This means that if we

[131] Ibid., p. 305.
[132] Ibid., p. 306.
[133] Ibid., p. 293.

take the externalist reading of Sidgwick such that egoism determines the justifiability of morality, then morality will turn out not to be justified after all. This claim which is contrary to the common belief Brink refers to, can be avoided through an internalist reading that assumes normative pluralism. We can then avoid the need to appeal to any external "super-standard" to justify morality. We can hold it to be true both that we ought to be moral and that we ought to be prudential; each conclusion justified in different ways through different criteria. We can thus avoid concluding that Sidgwick failed in his justification of morality. Both utilitarianism and egoism can be seen as self-evident and as mutually consistent, and since both can be true we can give a real sense to the dualism of practical reason.

Besides all the things mentioned, we see that normative pluralism is an internalist theory, and that Brinks externalist reading assumes normative monism. If what I have said in chapter **2** is sound, then we have good reasons to reject any theory which assumes normative monism. He would thus inherit all the problems related to this position. Brink concludes with the hope that a different, more objective, conception of happiness which recognizes important social or other-regarding components in an agents good can better vindicate the rationality of Sidgwick's utilitarian moral demands[134]. We should be wary of such a project. Would it really be a good conception of what happiness is? Can it accommodate *all* the things we take to determine the action's rightness? Could it find any non-idiosyncratic way of weighing self-regarding and other-regarding concerns? Would it be able to maintain traditional egoist concerns as genuine considerations to be taken into account? Can it accommodate a demanding morality? It seems that something has to give. Normative pluralism on the other hand can take seriously both the amoralist and the moralist.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter I have tried to spell out some of normative pluralism's implications for justification. The norms we have are justified by the criteria of our various standards, not through an appeal to some super-standard like the monistic 'ought all things considered'. The content of norms, that is, the actions required of us, can be justified by many different standards. Each standard yields a different type of justification than the other standards do.

[134] Ibid., p. 306

Normative propositions that have not specified its mode of justification are ambiguous, and it is one of the tasks of philosophy to show in what manner it can be justified.

Since there is no super-standard practical philosophy should be careful with trying to derive or justify one type of norms from a standard different in kind. These kinds of heterogeneous types of justification will not be valid, and cannot capture the way our norms are justified. I have mentioned Gauthier's attempt to derive morality from rational choice as one example of these kinds of invalid justifications.

Lastly, I examined Brink's attempt to apply an externalist theory of reasons to Sidgwick's dualism of practical reason. We found that internalism, along with normative pluralism, was able to offer a much better alternative. Not only could it give a more charitable interpretation of Sidgwick, but it could account for the normativity and justifiability of morality in a better way. Furthermore, it could make sense of amoralist skepticism – something we agreed to be required of a normative theory – and even give a charitable interpretation of the skeptic by supposing that he might even be right in some senses, while still avoiding the conclusion that morality is unjustified.

References

Brink, David O. ”Sidgwick’s Dualism of Practical Reason”, in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (Vol. 66, No, 3; September 1988, 291-307).

Broome, John. *Reasoning* (unpublished manuscript, 2005 (?)).

_____. “Is Rationality Normative?” (forthcoming in *Disputatio*), URL = <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~sfop0060/pdf/Is%20rationality%20normative.pdf> (visited 30.04.2008)

Chang, Ruth. “Introduction”, in *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical reason* (Ed. Ruth Chang), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Child, William. “Anomalism, Uncodifiability, Psychophysical Relations”, in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2 (April 1993:215-245).

Copp, David. “Contractarianism and Moral Skepticism”, in *Contractarianism and Rational Choice* (Ed. Peter Vallentyne), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Dancy, Jonathan. *Ethics Without Principles*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

_____. *Moral Reasons*, (Oxford, UK & Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993).

Davidson, Donald. “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme”, in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

_____. “Truth and Meaning”, in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

Gauthier, David. *Morals by Agreement*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

_____. “Why Contractarianism?”, in *Contractarianism and Rational Choice* (Ed. Peter Vallentyne), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Gowans, Christopher W. “The Debate on Moral Dilemmas”, in *Moral Dilemmas* (Ed. Christopher W. Gowans), (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Griffin, James. *Well-Being – Its Meaning, Measurement and Moral Importance*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

Hsieh, Nien-hê. "Incommensurable Values", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2007 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2007/entries/value-incommensurable/>. (visited 30.04.2008).

Kolodny, Niko. “Why Be Rational?”, in *Mind* (Vol. 114, July 2005, 509-563).

Raz, Jospeh. “Explaining Normativity: On Rationality and the Justification of Reason”, in *Engaging Reason*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

_____. “Incommensurability and Agency”, in *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical reason* (Ed. Ruth Chang), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

_____. *Practical Reason and Norms*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

_____. *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

_____. *The Practice of Value*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Richardson, Henry, *Practical Reasoning About Final Ends*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Sayre-McCord, Geoffrey, “Deception and Reasons to be Moral”, in *Contractarianism and Rational Choice* (Ed. Peter Vallentyne), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Sidgwick, Henry, *The Methods of Ethics*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981).

Stocker, Michael, *Plural and Conflicting Values*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

Stroud, Barry, *The Quest for Reality*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Thomsson, Judith Jarvis, *Goodness and Advice*, (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Vallentyne, Peter, “Gauthier’s Three Projects”, in *Contractarianism and Rational Choice* (Ed. Peter Vallentyne), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Wedgwood, Ralph, *The Nature of Normativity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Williams, Bernard, “Ethical Consistency”, in *Moral Dilemmas* (Ed. Christopher W. Gowans), (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Wright, Georg Henrik von, *Norm and Action*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).